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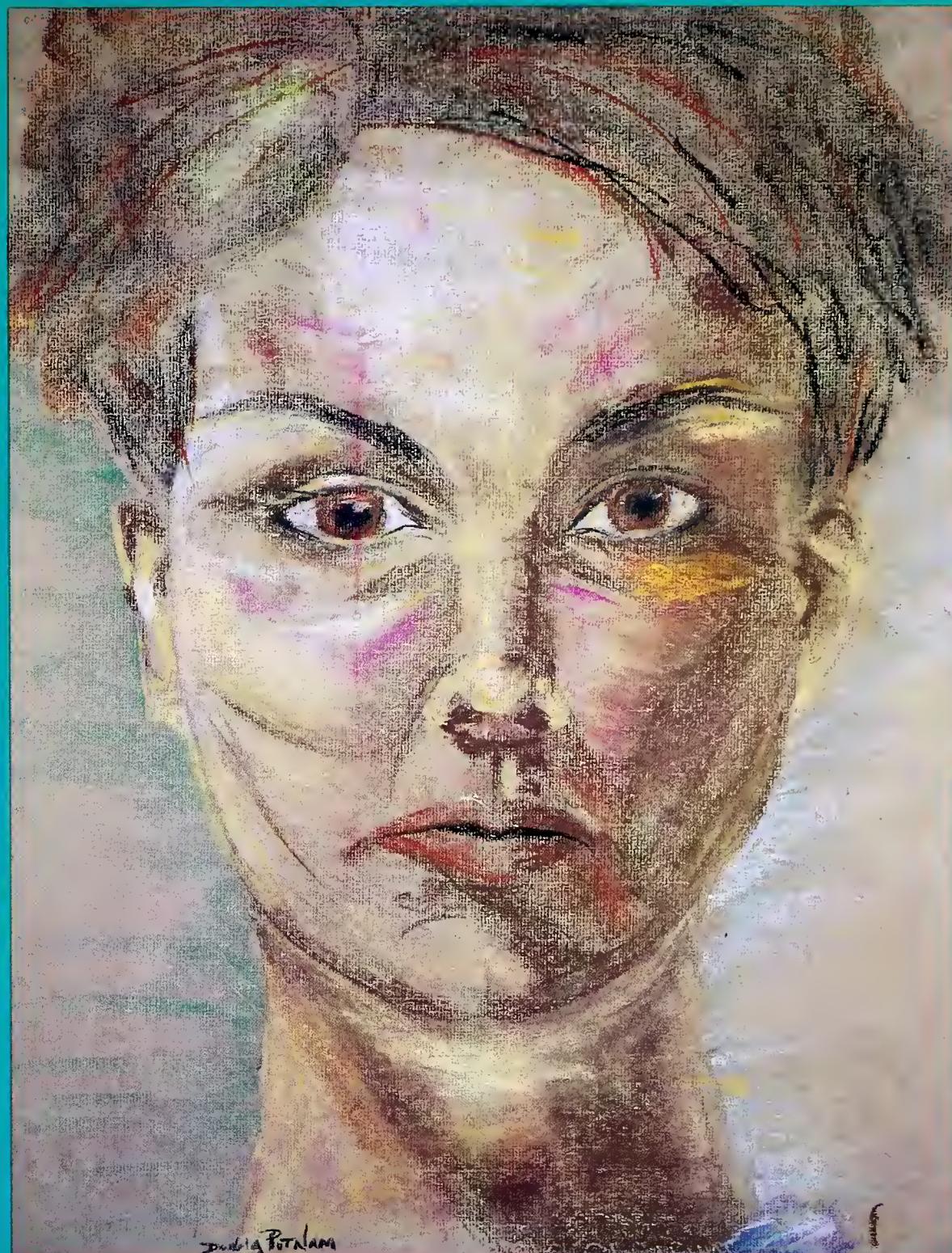
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P'an Ku

1993



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P'an Ku Volume twenty-three, number two was printed by Apollo Graphics
P'an Ku is designed, produced, and edited camera-ready solely by students at Broward Community College. All contributions in this issue are by students at BCC. This magazine is funded by the Student Activities Board and through advertising. The opinions expressed are those of our contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, faculty, staff, administration, or trustees of the college. Typed contributions with name, social security number, and telephone number are welcomed from students attending BCC.

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AUG 10 1995

Cover Art:

"Self Portrait" Pastel Drawing by *Donna Putnam*

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The Applicant

by

Lisa Martin

It was a rainy morning the day he entered our office in search of a job. He quietly accepted the employment application from the receptionist and seated himself in a far corner of the reception area. There was something odd about this applicant, and we stared at him with intense curiosity.

The clothes he wore were old and wrinkled and slightly damp from the morning rain. His shoes looked as though they had walked many miles, for they were badly scuffed and in dire need of a shine. His hair was dull and long overdue for a trim, yet it was obvious that he had combed it to look its best. His face was gaunt and tired looking.

He must have sensed the way we scrutinized him, for he looked away from the application and into our eyes. I was taken aback by what I saw. Unlike the rest of his body, his eyes were full of life. At that moment I knew what I didn't want to know: the man who had captured our attention was homeless.

I broke the stare, hopefully before he noticed the look of surprise on my face, and he resumed filling out the application. The receptionist turned to me and, with the

ignorance of a fool, began to belittle the man. "How," she asked, "could a man like this enter our office? What a bum!" she exclaimed, wishing for his departure and, I wouldn't doubt, his demise. This man who deserved a helping hand was instead being slapped in the face by someone who couldn't understand him.

I looked at this man; sadness filled my soul and my heart cried for him. On the seat beside him was a brown paper bag which I hadn't noticed before; it was unlikely that this bag contained anything less than his life's belongings.

When he completed the application he handed it to the receptionist unaware that she felt nothing but contempt towards him. He wished each of us a "Good Day," exited the office and walked into the rain. There was no car waiting for him; he simply walked away from the building with his head held high and hope in his heart.

His application never did make it to personnel.



Desperate Women

Women fling themselves
upon the men
and crawl upon
their sexes then.
What a dreadful state.
This is no place to find a mate.
Today I have him,
tomorrow her,
and the next day she.
His dick's so sore he cannot pee.

Faithful is a word
he can't abide,
so women take heed
be choosy in your time of need.
Or AIDS will come,
but it will not go.
And the dying
is so slow.

- *Joy Duffy*

Shells

Physical guidelines
govern human affections,
causing male eyes to rest
only on perfection.
Meanwhile, the mediocre
and the homely
aimlessly
wander the earth,
segregating themselves
into separate stages
of the living dead.
They curse the perfect
and condemn the men.
Their spirit conforms
to the morbid pain
of loneliness
brought on by their
outside appearances.

- *Rhiana*



Move On

Tired of waiting for the day when eagles
will control the wind-I decided to
take a stroll into the tunnel of my vision.

Unable to blind myself from the wax-work
of abandoned dreams and desires.
that decorated the spherical walls
from the threshold to one-half of infinity.
I looked for Virgil to guide me.
He too has forsaken me.

There was no return to conformity.

Traveling swiftly, unable to run.
I grieved heavily over individual sins,
accidental and intentional.

I wept on bended knees begging for a end.

No more pain was seen
I was now standing in the foyer of a mansion.
The second half of infinity.

Inviting me in was the butler
Sour Destiny.
I was tempted, but declined.

I retreated back into the tunnel of
my vision and embraced it-loved it,
and moved on.

- Dwayne T. Drayton

Dawnfishing

The line whispering, chasing down
the lure was the only sound
as we fished
with no words

to break the hush
in that soft, still time
that isn't darkness
isn't light.

His hand on my shoulder
this man who
long ago
before my strength ebbed
and his grew,
and he learned
the games men must play,
was a little boy
and I was a giant
allowed to kiss, and hug
and make the pain go away,
and make things right.

Now his hand's on my shoulder
and two good friends shared
the quiet magic of dawn.
As the world revealed itself,
one welcomed
the safe light of morning,
the other watched
tomorrow being born.

- Thomas E. Smith





"Untitled" Pencil Drawing by Annette Radoslovich

Jewel of the Sea

My world is slowly being destroyed
and I hate it.
I hate this feeling of complete helplessness,
of being at the mercy of uncaring strangers
who call themselves humans.

Generations of my ancestors have been destroyed.
Many of my friends were killed,
because men did not care that their dumping
ground was my world.

I once felt secure, at home, nestled within
my mother's womb.
Where the ground was the shifting sands of time,
and the undercurrents of the sea was heaven.

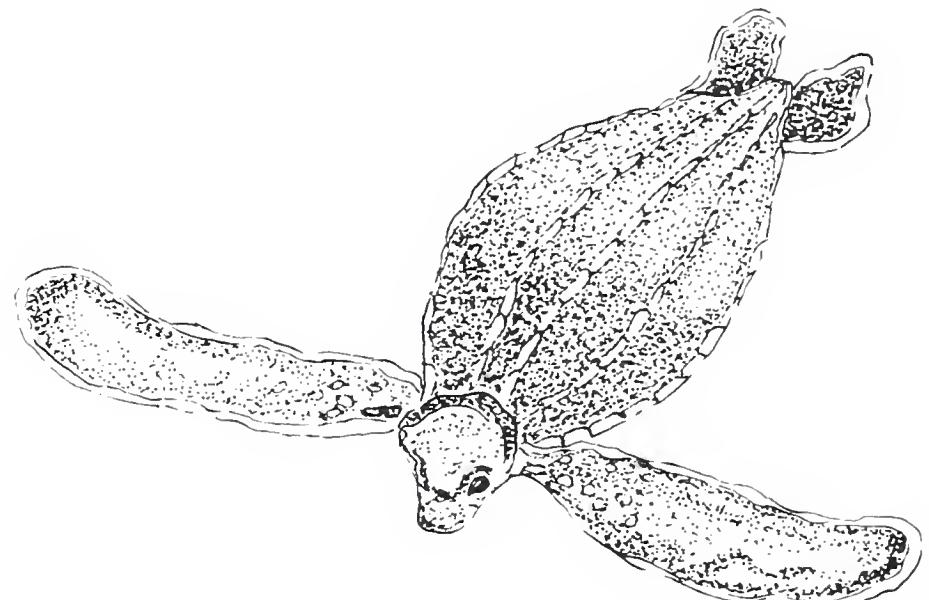
But, because of uncaring men,
I am ready to be brought forth from the womb
of my mother, the Oyster, and become
The jewel of the sea, 'A Pearl'

- Karen Saunders

Trips

Turtle journeys
purposefully
reaching quest
of foamy brine
avoiding soup stock.

- Carlotta A. Rody



Carlotta A. Rody



The Sandy Sands of Time *by Karen Modeste*

Sandy was probably the best stuffed animal out of my whole collection. I never liked playing with any other type of toy, and especially not dolls. Barbie was my worst enemy. I hated her cold, plastic, hard body. To me (a 10 year old going on 40), she was simply too plain.

Anyway, looking back I think I liked stuffed animals because it was like have my own baby. When I first held a moving new baby, I'd get this incredible rush. I felt as though the whole world were in my hands. This baby was mine. It was mine to name, mine to care, mine to cuddle, mine to keep, mine to love. Someone else might have a baby that looked like mine, but it could never be the same because that baby didn't have the same name, care, cuddling, keeper or love as my baby had.

Sandy was the cutest doggy of my collection. She had big, droopy, brown eyes. She had those sad, "I'm sorry" doggy kind of eyes. Sandy wasn't actually a dog; she was a puppy. She had a balloon shaped head that didn't leave enough room for a neck. Sandy was made to be in a good standing position so her hind legs were on the ground and her front paws at her side. Her floppy, dark brown ears fell a little past her shoulders. The rest of her body is small and chubby. Her white, round, jelly belly stretched the sky blue, sleeveless shirt she wore. Her shirt had small black print that read: "Please hug me."

That is exactly what I did every night before I went to bed. Every night until August 1984. It was a steaming hot Saturday afternoon on 34th street in Brooklyn. Although it was already 4:30 late afternoon, the sun's 98 degree effect had not worn out as yet. Mommy had let my sister, brother and

I go outside for and hour. So by this time it was time for us to go back upstairs to our two bedroom, 4th floor apartment. We were headed up the first flight of stairs when I noticed a fourth party. It was our 3rd floor neighbor's daughter and my sister's friend, Rachael.

I turned to my sister. "Where she goin'?" I asked, not trying to hide my annoyance.

"I'm gonna ask mommy if she could stay for a little while."

"You know she's gonna say no. You was just outside playin' with the stupid child." I was lying through my teeth. Mommy was more likely to say yes.

"I'm gonna' ask her anyway. Just leave me alone....and Rachel is not stupid!"

I hated that snot nose, nappy headed, can't keep her finger out her mouth for two minutes, dirty clothes wearing child. I had no idea why my sister who was a year younger than me wanted to play with a girl two years younger than herself. Rachel thought just because her parents were friends with my parents before we were born, that she was automatically part of the family. I was totally against her being in our room; playing with our stuff. Anything she touched she ruined. I don't know if it was possible or even healthy for a child to feel so much hatred so early in life, but I hated every God given bone in her body with all my little heart and soul until I could imagine the smell of her rancid



blood gushing from her little neck that I held in my hands.

Exactly what I was afraid of, was exactly what happened. My mother allowed Rachel to stay for a whole hour. Ten minutes into her stay, she was already wearing out her welcome. She was worse than my 4 year old brother. She'd been to our house more times than our closest relatives, but she still messes with things.

My mother was calling me into the kitchen to help her prepare dinner. As I was leaving the room, I caught a glimpse out of the corner of my eye. It was the devil child with her bugga infested hand about to touch Sandy. I wipped around and she hurled back over to the paper and markers she and my sister were drawing with.

"Don't even think about touchin' anything of mine. I'll wrap your arms around your body and throw you out the window." I glared at my sister and said, "You better watch your friend."

"She ain't do nothin' to you. She was just playin'. Gosh!"

"She ain't playin' with my stuff! Just don't let her touch my stuff!....and don't gosh me!" I left and went into the kitchen.

Twenty minutes later I walked back into my room. There was no sign of my sister or my brother. The only person in the room sat crossed legged in the middle of the floor. Sky blue pieces of cloth decorated her legs and the floor. At first I didn't realize, but then I saw her hands behind her back. Without hesitation, I pounced on her like a cat on its prey. The light of shock disappeared and the darkness of rage took over. She was already screaming like she was about to die and before I could get the taste of blood, mommy already had one of us in each hand.

"What the hell is going on here? Cassandra what happened? What is this mess on the floor? Why are you fighting with Rachel?"

"She cut up Sandy mommy." I said refusing to let the tears behind my eyes show.

"I was just playing with it."

My mother turned to the mound of cloth and foam that once filled the belly of my baby. "Rachael!! This is what you call playing? You destroyed Cassandra's toy!"

I couldn't believe it. My mother was actually on my side this time. I couldn't help but feel triumphant. My mother then proceeded to scold her and told her that she wasn't allowed to visit anymore. Now I was really excited. Later on that night, even without Sandy, I felt as though no one could ever try to hurt me again. For the first time, my mother took my side and stuck with it.

Three weeks after that night, the feeling was gone. Rachel's mother and Rachel came over. I waited in the doorway of my room for my mother to order Rachel out the house. Instead I saw shadows of my mother hugging Rachel and the sounds of their laughter. From that point on I never took my mother's words seriously and I knew there would never be a point in my life where I could take her seriously. I closed the door to my room, got into my bed and cried myself to sleep with the help of the rest of my babies.



CHRIS DEROSA

Spotlight:

Reptile

smoke filled bars
overturned cars
a green snake crawls

women in their prime
reflections in water
fences on the border

faded radio signals
rusted nails
blades of grass

broken headlights
birds in the moonlight

something sweet
strangers in the street

curtains in a blue hotel
a dead lizard
signed out

Visions of Daydreams

visions of daydreams
silver streams
highways
colored window panes
broken canes
doors
books and pages
crystal sages
hallways
alleys and exits
breezes through corridors
world wars

Summer Wind

deep night
crushed velvet hour
bird takes flight
cruel wind
unearthly breezes
summer wind
blow a gentle dream for me
blow through sand, dust, air
mixture
billowed sails
buckets and pails
on the shore
particles of dreams scatter
madly
wind breathes patterns in the sand
cool dark voices sing
weeping women and tired dogs
soft hurricanes
windblown dreams
the sound of infinity



"Lisa's Dream" B&W Photograph by Chris DeRosa

The Novel by Brian Goodstein

John sat down in his favorite chair, lit his cigarette with his favorite lighter, and began to work on his favorite hobby. As his nimble fingers struck the letters of his aged Smith Corona, all of his worldly problems dissipated with each click of the keys. Nothing else existed or mattered for a long as he expressed himself in the only way he knew...the written word.

It felt so good for John to start writing again. Sure he would always jot down an idea or two, but with the economy being the way it was, and writing bringing in little to no money, he had to give it up for a while and start a job as a gopher at a publishing agency. But all this had changed now, ever since his boss saw one of his roughs "carelessly" left on the office floor. John got commissioned to write his story, and he was happier than he had ever been before, doing what he enjoyed so much and getting paid for it. "Finally", he thought to himself while putting a new piece of paper into the machine, "someone is interested in my stories, in my words, in what I have to say!"

Just then, John's "beloved" girlfriend walked into the room. She had silky long hair, sparkling green eyes, and a beautiful toned body. As attractive as she was though, John could not stand looking at her. He hated to see her, he hated to hear her voice, and most of all he hated the way he was treated by her. Ever since they began living together, money had been a problem. John turned to his writing to try to pay the bills, while Karen turned to alcohol to forget about them. Everyday, she'd yell at him, demean him, and knock down everything he ever believed in. She embarrassed him in front of his friends, and now completely controlled his life. "Yes

dear" was the only thing he could ever say in his defense.

"Are you still writing that book?" she asked. "Aren't you ever gonna give up?"

John continued his typing as though he hadn't heard a thing, although his concentration was now fully broken. Karen continued on, not caring that John was busy at work, "Some woman named Carrie just called. You know that I don't like women calling you, John. I told her that you left town."

"You what?" John asked. "That's the secretary of McCafferey Publishing! That was about my book!"

"It's not like its gonna get published anyway. Nothing you write ever does," she said, downing half of her drink.

"They're already commissioning me. They're paying my expenses. That means they're paying our bills!"

John finished up the end of the sentence he was working on. He then started to shuffle through the papers that were scattered all over his desk.

"What are you looking for?" Karen asked.

"It's a yellow piece of paper with the phone number of McCafferey Publishing on it...have you seen it?"

"Maybe if you cleaned up this fucking room every once in a while, you'd be able to find your stupid papers," she said, taking another gulp from her overly potent screwdriver.

"Karen, please watch your mouth."

"Why, because I said fucking? Fuck fuck fucker fuck!" she taunted.

John rose from the chair, knocking over his coffee on the way. He raised his hand to Karen, something that he never dared do before. "Watch your mouth I said! You know



how I despise that kind of language!" he screamed, hand poised and ready to fly.

Karen just looked at his hand and laughed, "You would never hit me," she taunted, "You don't have the balls."

John kept his hand raised for a moment or two, then sat back down. "You loser," she hissed. Those words would have hurt John a few years ago, but now they didn't mean a thing. He was used to the verbal abuse from her. "And clean up that coffee you spilled," she continued, just before slamming the door behind her.

John just sat, thinking terrible things about his girlfriend, and even worse things about himself. "How could a person be so cruel and unfeeling," he thought, "And how have I been so stupid to take it all these years?"

The door opened up again and Karen threw a wrinkled up piece of paper in John's face. "Here's your stupid telephone number," she said, "The dog shit on the floor and I used it to clean it up."

John looked at the now brown and yellow piece of paper, and got ready to scream at her, but she had already left the room.

John cleaned up the coffee and called up his publisher.

"McCafferey Publishing, this is Carrie speaking," came a nasal voice over the phone.

"Hi Carrie, this is John Detters, is Mr. McCafferey in?"

"No, he just stepped out for lunch, but he left a message for you. He said that he's looking forward to reading your book, but he needs to change your deadline date. He said it needs to be completed by the eighteenth."

"Ok, March eighteenth," John said, taking a note of it on his calendar, "That should be no problem."

"No sir, that's the eighteenth of February."

"The eighteenth?" John exclaimed, "but that's in less than two weeks!"

"Sir, I'm just relaying information. If you would like

to speak to Mr. McCafferey personally, you can reach..."

"No, that's all right," John interrupted, not wanting to push his luck, "I'll get it done. Have a nice day."

John hung up the phone. He wasn't too upset about the movement of the date as he worked well under pressure. He readied his typewriter and continued on to the eighth chapter. The book was going to be twelve chapters long so John knew he would have to work hard to get his novel completed.

Day after day, John did nothing but work on his novel. And day after day, Karen's pestering got worse and worse. Three days before the deadline, she burst into his office, "Are you attached to that damn typewriter?" she exclaimed.

"I have a deadline, dear," John said coldly, for the past few weeks, John was taking Karen's abuse less and less.

"Well hurry up and finish, I'm hungry."

"You could cook something for yourself for a change."

"Well you could do something around here for a change. But then again, I don't even know if you could turn the oven on, you sure as hell can't turn me on anymore," she said taking a swallow of rum.

John continued typing, trying to ignore Karen's harsh words. "Get out and let me work, just leave me alone." "Awwww, just leave me alone," Karen taunted, "You sound like a little fucking baby! Are you gonna cry now? Hmmm? Are you going to cry little baby?"

"Out!" screamed John, "Get the hell out! Let me work!" Karen only snickered and slowly walked towards the door. "By the way," she said, "Since you're so into this damn novel, you can sleep in here tonight." And with that she threw the door shut.

John continued to write. As long as he was writing, anything she said or did would not matter. He loved writing so much. And this novel was coming out beautifully. He had no doubts that he'd finish before the deadline as he was

reaching the climactic end of his story. As he continued, however, he found he had trouble with the last chapter. It involved a very dramatic murder, and John simply could not find the words that would correctly state such an act.

"Everything else in this book," John thought, "has been so filled with description. Some of my best writing ever, but how can I put this in words? It is such a heinous crime, and it must be written perfectly. I want people to know the emotions of the murder, the feeling of excitement, resentment, and hatred that he feels. I want my readers to be able to visualize the look on the victim's face, from the look of surprise to the draining of life."

John could not think of what to write, and he simply stopped working for the night. He had found that the best cure for writer's block was to sleep on it, to keep his mind off of it for a while, and come back when an idea had flourished in his head. John decided to give in to his girlfriend's demands, and make dinner for the two of them. He did not look forward to this, as eating near her only caused him to lose his appetite.

Two days before the deadline, John was still stuck. He hadn't written anything new, and was getting nervous about it. He decided that he would take a walk to the park, in order to get away from Karen, away from the typewriter, away from his apartment. After all, he hadn't been outdoors for weeks now, and he knew that a change of atmosphere would do him good. It would keep his mind off things, at least for an hour or two.

As he walked out the door, John noticed so much outside. He noticed how much he enjoyed the quiet of the chilly night. He realized that the chirping of the crickets and the wind passing by was so much more pleasant than the electrical noise of a TV in the nearby room, and the low humming of the air conditioning. Yes, John had definitely been cooped up in that house for too long. It was about time,

John thought, that he had a few hours of freedom, some time to himself.

John came back an hour later, closed the door quietly behind him so as not to wake Karen. He hung his coat up on the rack and headed silently towards his room. On his way there though, he noticed a light on in his office. He cursed at himself for leaving it on, as he always tried to conserve electricity, and headed towards the door. When he opened it though, he saw Karen sitting in his favorite chair, reading the pages of the novel. She looked up at him and said, "Is this what you've been doing for the past six months? This is shit! This isn't even good enough to wipe my ass with!" she yelled, taking a swig from a bottle of Absolute.

John could feel the anger searing up inside him once more. He hated foul language, especially when Karen used it against him. And now she was insulting what he had been working on, his writing, and though he would never expect a compliment from his girlfriend, the insult still hurt him intensely. The anger kept building up as these thoughts swarmed through his head. His writer's block, unsolved by his walk just added to his frustration. And that walk, a taste of freedom, something he hadn't had for so long. He knew what he had to do.

He snatched the bottle from Karen's hand and struck it against her head. The sound of the glass shattering against her skull echoed like musical chimes in John's mind. He pounced on her falling body and wrapping his hands around her neck. John's pulse quickened as he squeezed and said, "There! Now you see! This is where a filthy mouth will get you, you filthy bitch!"

She tried to scream but John's clamping grip on her throat kept any plea of mercy from escaping. Karen's face was turning blue, with her tongue thrashing all about. Her beautiful green eyes were bulging forth, darting from left to right. Blood red shards of glass sparkled in her silky blonde hair.



Her body was in spasmodic tremors, like those of a hanged man. John looked at the number of colors that now adorned Karen's face and realized how beautiful she could be. John's grip tighten, and for the first time in a long time, he enjoyed looking at his girlfriend. He enjoyed watching her life drain away. Her eyes, color faded, were setting back into her head. he enjoyed the gurgling, gasping sounds that she made. And oh how he loved the way she helplessly twitched when her last bit of life was strangled out of her. John's heart resumed a normal pace, like the comfortable state after the climax of sex. John looked at her pale blue face, contrasted by the deep red blood that tricked down from her scalp and laughed. "For years I have been trying to get you to shut up, and now I've done it. What do you have to say to that? Huh? I can't hear you!"

John sat down in his favorite chair, lit his cigarette with his favorite lighter, and finished the last chapter of the story. He then typed up the dedication, " To my dear Karen. Without you, this book would have never been possible."



"Duel After the Masquerade" Etching by Stephen G. McKenzie

Time to Leave

In all things, I see light, colors,
and feelings that come together.

Words I say, actions I take,
all combined in the mistakes I make.

For all things are uncertain to me,
except the certainty of forever.

People I know, places I see,
all nothing compared to eternity.

The things I feel inside and
all the knowledge I have now,
seems to me like so, so little,
yet it is all that time allows.

Somewhere, there must be more,
something to truly understand.
A place where I can roam,
where I can be me.
Someplace where I'm free.

I feel this place is close now,
it's my eternal dreamland.

No false feelings, no sad times,
an endless sugar sea.

It is time to use...
the last strength that I have stored...
to rip from me this binding silver cord.

Nothing more to view,

I have seen all that is here.

I have nothing more to fear.

- Mike Bigansky

Missing You So Much

I wish I can tell you exactly the way I feel about you right now, but I know it is impossible unless it is through prayer. Memorable moments and first time experiences that we both shared together, have been kept in my heart and will not ever be forgotten. At times I wish it could be simply because I feel this undescribable, pain in my heart that hurts drastically. Many times I get very bitter and my anger is taken out on the innocent. I am trying quietly to cope with the pain. I know I have to go on with my life. So I try to stay busy and meet different people everyday. But you have a special place in my heart that has your name written on it. I know that one day will come when we will be together once more, but until then, I will be forever missing you.

-Albert Gerena

A Quest for Nothingness

by
Alfred Zweig

She was his first love. The mistress he had kept hidden in his heart but not out of his mind for low these years. He had never spoken of her to any of his other lovers, after all, they had been mere mortals. Now astride her rolling bosom she entranced and seduced him again like an old lover met in some strange new city far from places filled with bittersweet memories of goodbyes.

The frigid blue water shocked his body into spasms and focussed his mind on the infinite depths below him with a crystalline clarity that made him wont to give himself up in totality to this cold enchantress. surfacing aft of the sailboat he gulped air furiously while grasping for the lifeline trailing silently behind the craft. Had he gone mad, if only for an instant, to plunge himself off his ship here in the middle of nowhere? "No," he thought, "I will not doubt my own sanity." At this point in his life doubt was his only certainty and his last remaining link to anything remotely real.

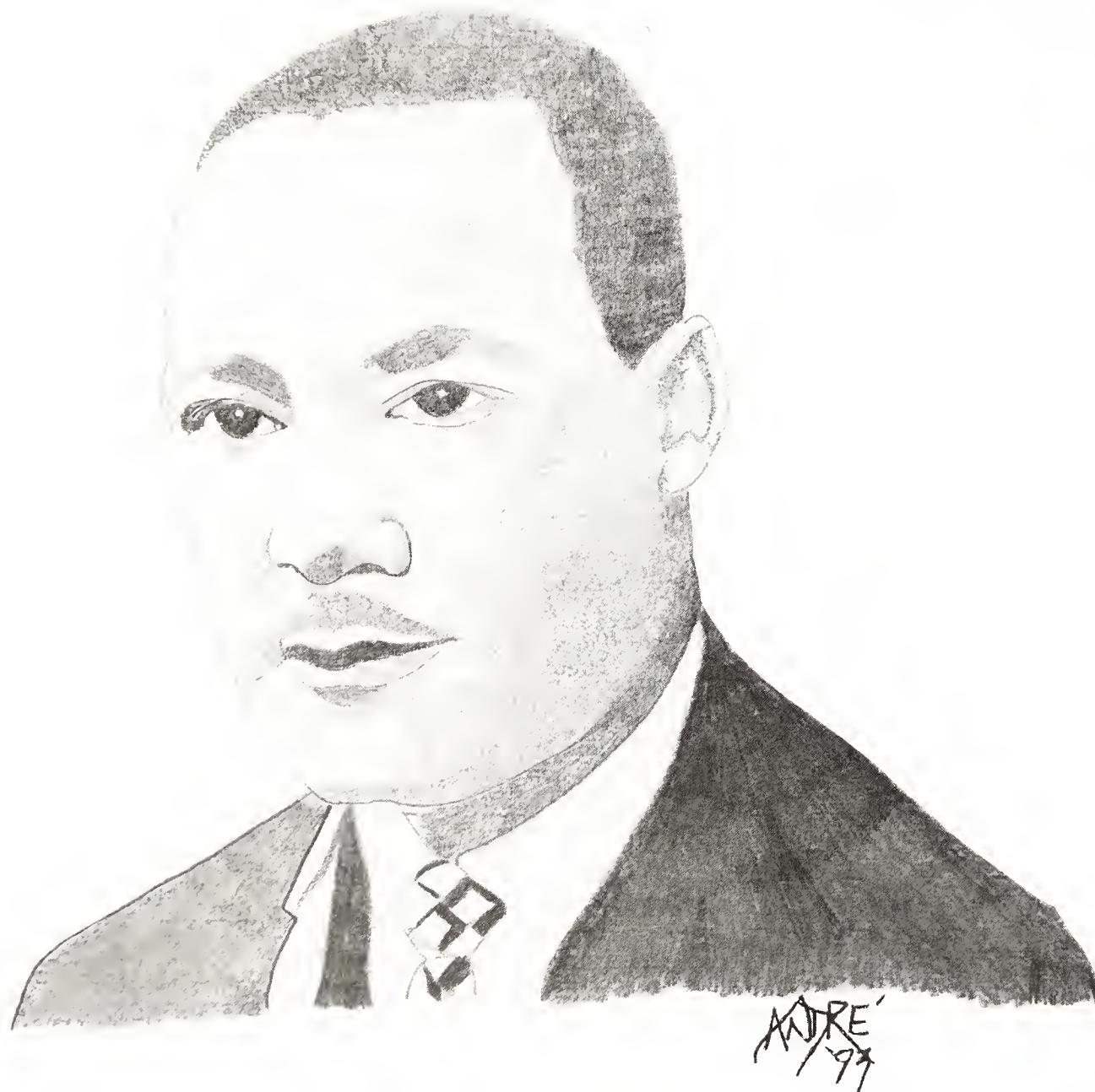
Dragging behind the boat with his arm entwined with the rope, he mused his unique perspective: the benevolent mother dragging her reluctant offspring to his destiny, fighting this reluctance, he pulled himself back aboard.

Once on deck he stooped to catch his breath and was entranced by the color of his legs. Were they really that bronze? He was no health freak but swimming and endless walks in the solitude he so treasured had helped to keep him in better shape, at least visually, than his forty odd years should betray. But it was the color that had caught him off guard. It meant he was loosing track of time. Time he has only recently become aware of, years, hours, decades all seemed to meld into yesterday and yesterday was gone.

But, after all what did he really care? The lone Bedouin had no one waiting for him. Somewhere, he liked to think, there was a friend who, for no apparent reason, would think of him and wonder where he was, but his ears never rang and he doubted they ever would. No, he had burned too many bridges, even the ones he had painstakingly rebuilt at great cost to both his ego and his pride.

He is the persona of aloneness but he was scarcely ever lonely. No, loneliness was like a gull who perched high overhead in the rigging, he would pause, cast his shadow momentarily and then he was gone.





"Untitled" Pencil Drawing by Andre' L. Ponder

The Dream

A cold, dark shadow appears on my wall
Thunderous shouting begins to fill my room
Wake up! Wake up, you fool, it bellows
Face your realities
Cease your meaningless dreaming.

I am frightened
What is this bizarre horror that has come to haunt me?
I want to scream, rant, rave, defend myself
I want to answer, Banish Yourself!
Leave my life, wicked one
I do not need irrational intrusions
I do not need intrusions

Movement is not possible
I am paralyzed
I have no reply, no defense
I try to block out the sounds
I wait
and wait

Soon it is quiet
Too quiet
I can no longer hear anything
But I feel hot, stinging tears
rolling down my taut, pale cheeks
This is real, I cry out
I am stunned by the hollow sound of my own voice
I cautiously open my eyes
My room is empty
There are no cold, dark shadows
No thunderous shouting
only a macabre silence

The tears come faster now
I cannot stop them
I have lost control again
The realization is crystal clear
The dream is real
I am trapped by own fear.

-Barbara Glenn

Survival of the Fittest

I saw society's little man's tears
His grey labors of pain and neglected cares.
I saw society's giant smile,
Laugh and sing while assets pile
And its is called survival of the fittest.

I saw a 16 year old's dreams of writing disappear,
He quit school and worked
so his Mom could have something to wear
His boss overworked him with little compensation,
Knowing the lad couldn't leave because of his
situation,
And it is called survival of the fittest.

I saw chemical poison being sold on every street
corner,
And with every dollar made, somewhere lies its victim's
mourner,
I saw two men go for a job with the same
qualifications
But one was instantly denied because of skin
differentiation
And it is called survival of the fittest.

Humanity is rejected and only hate is being reflected
The tears of the oppressed are constantly being
neglected
While their oppressors often go uncorrected
And it is really called Survival of the fittest.

-Sean K. Alleyne



The Cans

by Laurie Thomas

Customers flowed in, relieved of the hot summer air. They take their time browsing from shelf to shelf to find their needs. The products are fine and each has its own uniqueness, but none other can tell a story like the cans

Fortunate cans are rich and stand freshly untouched. The less fortunate cans fall over on the shelf, some to the shelf below, and others hit the floor. From time to time, a can may get its label ripped off and no longer have a name. The most unfortunate cans hit the floor and roll beneath the shelf, hidden from anyone's sight. Some cans receive small dents that are not seen, while others get huge dents that never go unnoticed. But ya know?? Someone is always there to pick the cans up. The labels are taped back on. We look up to the fortunate cans to show how the cans were stacked in the beginning. So what about those cans that rolled beneath the shelf hidden from anyone's sight?? My dear friend, hope still lies, because spring cleaning is soon to come!

Remember the cans, because their story is....
— the story of our lives.



A Boisterous Intruder

by Kathleen Mahoney-Ingrao

I can still remember THAT day. I was lying in bed dreaming of a circus and of eating a huge bag of pink and blue cotton candy. But it was a light sleep because I was simultaneously, though unconsciously, waiting for father to come in and kiss me on the cheek. I woke suddenly and sat up alert and frightened. Something was wrong. I could hear voices, higher pitched than normal, but no one came in to wake me. And then I heard it. The sound of the devil himself howling from Mother's room and she, speaking soothingly to the beast. I lay back down and pretended to be asleep. I heard the door knob turn.

"Hey, Barbara, rise and shine," said Father, "and come meet your new baby brother," he added almost as an afterthought. He then rushed back to his bedroom without even kissing me good-morning!

"Oh, I don't want a brother!" I cried to God, knowing that he would well understand. "Can't you send him to someone else's home? Surely I am enough for Mom and Dad."

Filled with this passionate hope, I put on my purple rabbit slippers, brushed my hair, and went to my parents' room.

"Barbara, come see! He looks just like you," Mother said as I peeked through the open door.

"Don't be silly, Mommy. He's a boy and I'm a girl. besides, he's fat and bald. He looks more like Daddy," I said, quite shocked to be compared to such a hideous creature. "Shall we dress him, em, what's his name?"

"How does Tom sound? And why should we dress him?" asked Mother.

"How about Suma, you know, like those fat wrestlers. Anyway, Mom, we've got to dress him for the Wagners. They've been wanting a boy, and if this Tom here is all dressed up, he might look normal. Then maybe they would take him. I've already discussed it with God."

"Barbara, listen up now. Tom is part of our family and it's going to stay that way, so I suggest that you start getting used to it. And I don't want to hear anymore of donating your brother to the neighbors." said Father. I was truly appalled. how could they actually want this creature, especially without my consent? I decided that I must somehow be rid of him before he did anymore damage to my family.

A few nights later, I was watching television with Father while Mother fed and bathed HIM. There was an an ingenious plot in the movie involving leaving a child in a box on the Church footsteps. I said good-night to Father.

"Are we going to Church tomorrow, Daddy?" I asked with pure sweetness before I went upstairs.

"Of course, Barbie. Shhh, the movie's back on," Father said. He stared at the T.V. set.

Quite deftly, I altered my track and tip-toed to the kitchen. I searched thoroughly until I found a box small enough for me to comfortably carry yet large enough to hold The Beast. I brought it into my room. As Mother was still bathing Tom, I went into his room and chose a thick blanket, just like the one in the movie. I put the blanket in the box and went to bed, fully resolved to finish my task the following morning.

At first light, I sat up, rubbed my eyes, and stepped into my slippers. I looked in the corner and looked again. The box was gone! I searched under my bed and in the closet, but to no avail. It was gone; my plan was ruined. I got back in bed and cried until I was exhausted and fell into a deep sleep.

I dreamt of HIM. There he was, crying and kicking his feet in his crib. And boy, did he smell something awful! And there was Mother and Father leaning over the crib, forgetting all intelligible English and making strange faces at the boy. Then a miracle occurred: an angel came, obviously sent by God in answer to my nightly prayers, who took him away to the Wagner's house. And my parents came to me and kissed me and...

"Good morning, Barbie," said Father as he patted my cheek.





"Get ready for Church. Oh, by the way, Fluffy is very happy with the bed you made for her last night. Mom put it downstairs, but she replaced it Tom's new blanket with an old one. Now hurry up or we'll be late."

How could he mock me like that? He had to know what I intended with that box! And they went and gave it to the cat!

I was very unhappy at church. "God, he's still with us. What's taking so long to be rid of him?" I demanded righteously. Well, the day wasn't over yet. When we got home from Church, Mother and Dad were too tired to make Sunday waffles and expected me to eat cold cereal on the Sabbath! Well, I simply refused to eat and would not eat again until HE was gone. I went up to my room to have a serious discussion with Raggedy Ann.

"Well, Annie, what shall we do? This Tom is ruining my life! He cries all day and takes Mom's and Dad's attention all the time. They have forgotten all about me and wouldn't even notice if I were gone!"

"I stopped. Hmm. If I were gone. Well, if I can't be rid of him, perhaps I must leave. I stealthily retrieved a small bag from the hallway closet and began packing some items: brush, barrettes, rabbit slippers, coloring book and crayons, socks with lacy edges, candy bracelet, Winnie-the Pooh, and my new paint set. since my stomach was growling, I made a mental note to get some cookies and Kool-Aid before leaving.

After what seemed and eternity of playing and planning undisturbed, the sun began to set. I knew Mother would be in the kitchen making dinner and Father would be in his den reading. I picked up Raggedy Ann and my things and went downstairs. as I approached the first floor, I saw a huge box in the middle of the living room with Tom inside. He was very quite for a change. I eyed him suspiciously as I walked past the pen. He did not move.

"Tom," I said. He didn't move. "Tom," I said again, louder, but still he slumbered. "Oh no. He's dead!" I screamed. "Oh, I'm SO sorry. Please God, let him be okay. I take back everything I ever said about him. Ugly and stinky as he is, he's still my brother and...and I guess I love him."

Tom opened his eyes, startled by my outburst. He began to cry, loudly and profusely. he screamed and cried while I grinned gaily. I went over and kissed him on the forehead.

ALMA MIA

ALMA ENCENDIDA
TAL VEZ HERIDA

MEZCLA DE GRAN TERNURA Y CRUEL ANSIEDAD
DE ILUSION Y FANTASIA
Y AL FINAL SOLO SOLEDAD

ALMA MIA
AFERRANDOTE ESTAS
UNA VEZ MAS
A LO QUE A TU PASO
ENCONTRANDO VAS

- Cecilia Chiok

QUIZAS TU...O TAL VEZ YO

*CUAL DE LOS DOS SERA MAS FUERTE?
TU CON TU LOCURA CASI A OSCURAS
O YO CON MI CORDURA A LA LUZ DE AQUELLA
CASILUNA?*

*CUAL DE LOS DOS SERA MAS FUERTE?
CUANDO LA RAZON VUELVA A TOMA POSICION
Y MI CORAZON VAYA HACIA LA TOTAL PERDICION*

*QUIZAS TU...O TAL VEZ YO
PARA ENTONCES YA LOS DOS HABREMOS PERDIDO LA
NOACION; TAL VEZ LA ILUSION O MAS AUN EL CORAZON.*

- Cecilia Chiok



The Absence Of Me

Went to visit my father last evening
at a rest home they call Mountain View.
"Guess who I saw this mornin'," he greeted,
"Grandpa Higgins and young Mary Lou...
an' they took me back home to Kentucky,
somethin' I've just been dyin' to do.

"I could smell Mama's baked beans a cookin'
an' I heard me a red-bird or two.
An' I saw all the cows in the meadow —
an' I felt that hot sun through and through.

"We cooled off for a while in the milkhouse,
an' I had me a swig of home brew...
an' it kicked like a mule from Missouri,
an' it made me all light-headed too.
But I still see their faces so clear-like
an', I know that what happened is true...
There's just one little thing I ain't sure of...
Tell me,....just who in blue blazes are you?"

Erasing me clean-as-a-whistle,
he turned with no further adieu
to rejoin his friends in the parlour,
and retell his story anew.

Straight From The Horse's Mouth

Old Zeke's been in a tizzy
ever since I went on strike,
cuz I'm sittin' on his front porch....
where I'll stay, by gum, and fight!
I'm sick of eggs and bacon,
with toast and marmalade.
I want my oats and bran back—
ENOUGH of this charade!

The hogs still get their daily mash.
the chickens get their feed,
but oats and bran mean ready cash—
and Zeke's give-in to greed.
So what if Kellogg's paying big,
don't I deserve a break ?
I've hauled his butt 10,000 miles—
and BACK for goodness sake!

They never owned no jackass,
not with me to fill the bill,
In every kind of weather, when
their Ford can't make the hill.
And every blessed summer
all their kids were on my back,
"Hi Ho Silverin'" in my eardrums
umpteen times around the track.

Well, now, I just pray that MAN gets sick of bran
and gives up eating oats,
and some smart Doctor, somewhere proves
Cholesterol's a hoax...
and Zeke and I see eye-to-eye,
then I'll lay down the torch,
get up off my backside—
and clear off his front porch.



Tender Vittles

DENVER: A 24-year-old man was killed and dismembered in his girlfriend's apt., after he threw her cat against the wall and smashed her television. (The Miami Herald, March 1990)

Tender Vittles

"Dinner's ready, Pussy dear,
I hope you like braised knee.
We'll save the ribs for Saturday
and watch our new T.V.
Your tail will straighten out with time,
the memory will fade.
That nasty tempered man is gone—
You needn't be afraid."

Pond Memories

I thrilled at watching polliwogs
turn magically from fish to frogs...
when I was young.

I wondered how their tails and fins
snuck-back inside their splotchy skins...
when I was young.

They'd grow themselves one "foot" each day,
then all too soon they'd hop away...
when I was young.

Hide and Seek

Running like a rabbit-
barefoot in the dirt.
Crouching neath the sunporch...
spiders up my skirt.
Holding every other breath,
lest I be found out.
Squashing spiders silently...
till the final shout-
"Come out! Come out! Wherever you are!"



Birds of a Feather...

Have I not feelings like you? If you cut me do I not bleed?

Do I not cry?

Yes!

Then we are both from the same breed,
We are similar creatures that feel love and pain,
we feel pain when hurt,
And happiness when love,
Then why must you hurt me?
My heart is not made of stone,
It is made like yours,
Of Love,
You cannot touch it, because it is not tangible,
You cannot hold it, because it is not solid,
But you can feel it,
you can see it,
It's in my smile and in my actions.

Do you not feel pain when hurt?

Yes!

Do you not cry?

Yes!

Does your heart not quiver when in love?

Yes!

Then we are from the same breed,
No one said love was not a risk,
There's danger in everything we do,
And sometimes we have to take a risk,
It's better to take the risk,
Than not to know at all,
Love can be a pleasure,
If you just let it fly,
But if you should shun away,
You're cheating your heart,
We are the same creature,
We are from the same breed,
Let us feel love,
Pain!
Hurt!
Together.

- Karen White

Wey Gat

(Wind Gate)

Physical impressions

are surging through my mind,
making it hard to find
the real
truth of what I feel.

Remnants of sensations

I felt not long ago,
have now
come flooding back,
and I lack
all self-control.

My emotions are a flame.

My desires are wild.
Now, I find I am not a child
in this game,
but a creature from some other place
who is searching every face,
looking for a spirit
who is equal.

Each touch sparks a conflagration
of passionate creations

in my mind,
and I must find
another victim
to relieve this mad addiction,
until the images resume,
and the madness consumes
me once again.

- Rhiana





"Untitled" B&W Photograph by Linda Reese



"Untitled" B&W Photograph by Linda Reese



"Morpheus Rising" Computer Art by Mark Jette'

Poor Ole' Ms. Crawford by Kenneth Payton

Here comes Sheriff Dunning, he's here to dig up poor ole' Ms. Crawford. We buried her 'bout two months ago under that there oak tree. I don't know how Sheriff Dunning can just go dig'er up, it being such a pretty plot and all. All I know is I sure hate havin' to be here when she comes outa' her grave, but Mr. Johnson, he's my boss, said I had to stick around to see over things and make sure notin' goes wrong. I sure hate havin' to be here though.

Ole' Ms. Crawford had it hard after we had to bury Mr. Crawford last summer. His pump just quit on'im, Doc Swensen called it some pulmonary thing. Don't know why someone's heart just stop, but his sure did. Anyway, Ms. Crawford didn't take to Mr. Crawford's dying too well. At the ceremony she fell back right flat on the ground, thought her pump done stopped too. Doc Swensen said it was hot out and she had just passed out. She was okay after a few minutes, by then everyone was right upset. It didn't take long for everyone to start headin' home after that, except poor ole' Mr. Crawford of course.

The Sheriff and two negro boys from the other side of town done started diggin' her up. Don't look like the Sheriff even gonna break a sweat with them two negro boys around. They got their work cut out for'em, and that's for sure. Around here we pack our grave down good, Mr. Johnson wouldn't have it any other way, he says it's so they don't dig their way back up. All I know is it's gonna take most the day to dig that grave with two shovels. We use Mr. Johnson's tractor to dig the graves usually, but Mr. Johnson said he won't have not'in to do with no grave robbin'. He says it just ain't right diggin' up no dead body, and I agree. He wouldn't even come around today, just made me stick around to make sure notin' goes wrong.

Doc Swenson said Ms. Crawford died right after the accident, God bless her soul. With her husband gone, she had to do all the work around the farm. Well, she brought the harvest in and now it's gettin' to be spring she had to start plowin'. On day she tried runnin' a plow with that old stubborn mule of hers, like she'd seen Mr. Crawford do so many times before. She was doing a pretty good job too, until that stubborn mule froze. She couldn't get it to move for nothin' in the world. I guess she got kinda' upset with that darn mule, cause she went right up to it and gave it a good hard smack right on the behind. That old mule moved alright, it reared back and kicked poor ole' Ms. Crawford right in the side of the head, can't see how nobody could live through that. Some say she's

better off up with Mr. Crawford anyway, God bless her soul.

Well, they finally scraping at that coffin now. I bet poor ole' Ms. Crawford cam hear'em scrapin', they wantin' to get in and Ms. Crawford just wanting to get out. Them two boys sittin' down to take a little rest now. I guess they deserve it, they both sweatin' harder than a wild boar hog cornered in a covert.

This new city doctor came into town just before Ms. Crawford died. He claimed he was here to take over Mr. Swensen's job when he retires, or dies whichever comes first. Mr. Swensen didn't seem to mind considering he was still a single man and never had any kids to take over his job for him. That new city doctor tagged along with Doc Swensen everywhere he went, kinda like a puppy dog. I suppose they got along pretty good until Ms. Crawford died. When Ms. Crawford died they got into a big argument and that city doctor left town. Sam, the barber in town, said that city doctor said Ms. Crawford wasn't dead just sleepin' a spell, used some fancy city words for it tough. I ain't no doctor, but she's dead. I had to move her, and accidentally touched her, and she was cold just like every other dead woman, and I can't see how any woman, or man, could live through that kick to the head.

Speak of the devil, here comes that city doctor now. Ain't seen him 'round for a while. Guess he's here to watch them boys pull up Ms. Crawford. They almost got her up out of the ground, guess he ain't gotta wait long. I heard when the new city doctor came back into town, he gave the sheriff some order from the court to dig up Ms. Crawford. He says he can prove she wasn't dead when she was buried. I know she was though, 'cause I touched her. If you ask me, I think he just wants to run Doc Swensen out of town so he'll have some wheres to work.

Well, they finally got that coffin up. Now they're prying the lid off. She sure does smell awful. Everyone leaned in to have a look, I figured I'd have me a look too. There's Ms. Crawford alright, still wearin' her Sunday best, just like we buried her. Her legs are all shriveled up and her chest is all sunk in. She sure does smell bad though. Her eyes and mouth are wide open as if she'd been scared to death. And them hands, they're up beside her head holding on to a handful of hair in each. All her hair is pulled right out of her head and her dress was ripped all around the neck. Looks like Mr. Swensen gonna be lookin' for a new job after this gets around. Ain't nobody wantin' to wake up after their funeral, not me anyway.

World of Salt and Sand

In the water.

The huge blue creature drags me.

The salt stings my eyes.

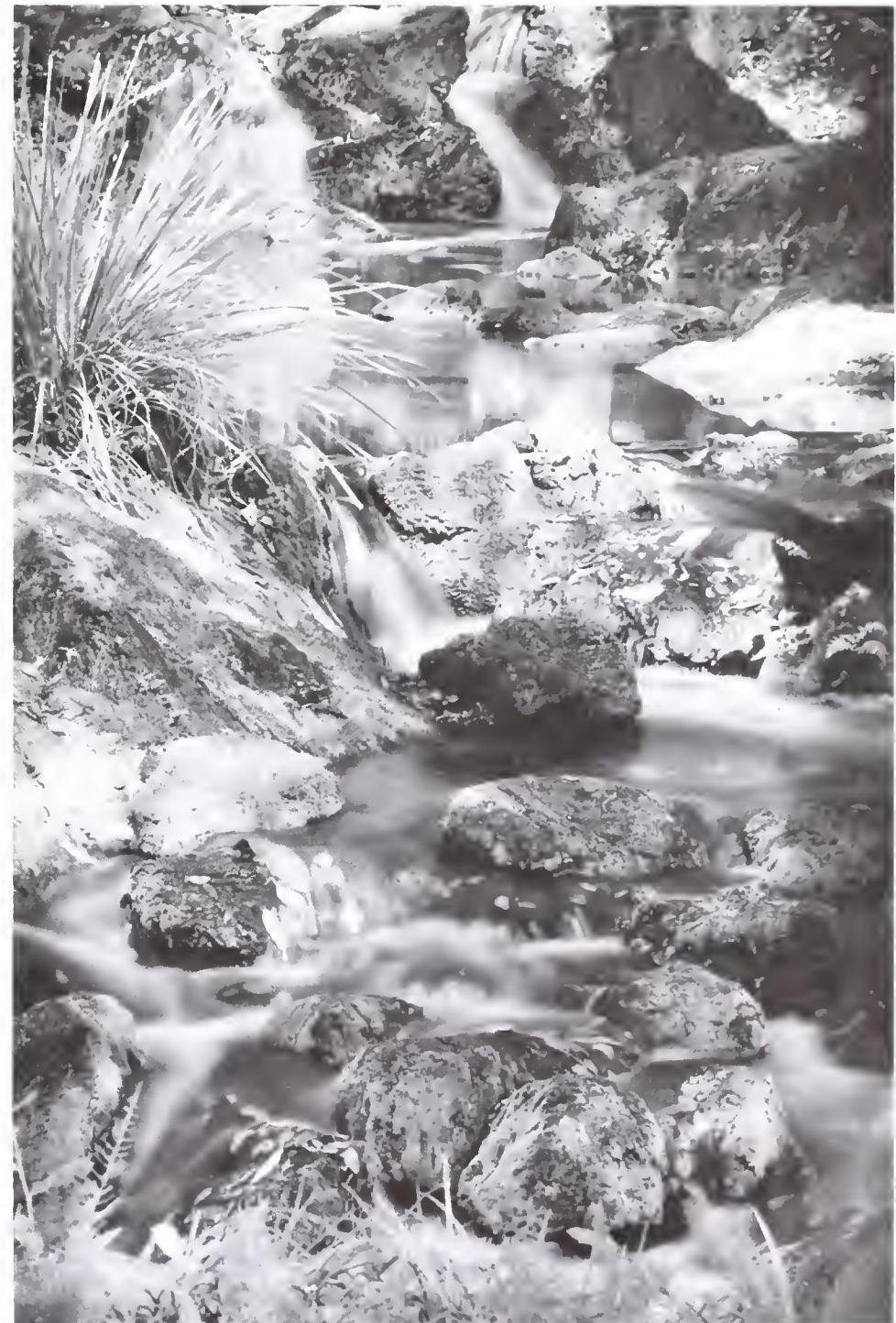
The sand is in my hair and ears.

The cool and warm currents confuse my skin.

As I depart from it's blueness, the waves call me.

"Come back," say the waves as they break on the sand.

-Reynaldo Ramirez



"The Stream" B&W Photograph by George Hockenberger



"Imperiatrix Arachne" Acrylic&Ink by Travis C. Wright

The Mission

by

Travis C. Wright

Swiftly and silently ploughing the Stratus, the beetle-shaped vessel edged downward, closer to its destination. Seen through the electromagnetic haze, the landscape bestowed an impression of deep cold—a frigid abyss of dead metal forsaken by the warmth, the aura of living things. Perhaps the only structure organically inspired on this planetoid of scrap was the egg-shaped hemisphere of the refinery; since the occupant of the tiny craft soaring above the structure had access to a plethora of viewing perspectives and spectrums, he could perceive the dome of energy surrounding the structure. From above, the refinery (actually well-preserved for its environment) appeared to be the yolk inside of a gigantic egg. The analogy was rather complete now, although the occupant of the vessel did not make any such ironic connections.

Plunging toward the dome, the craft skimmed the protection bucklers. The only evidence of intrusion was a slight hiss and phasing of the on-board monitors. The shell was breached. Any scanning eyes from below absorbing the cadmium hue of the firmament could scarcely have discerned the beetle-ship from the swirling, dancing bodies of debris constantly being windblown, magnetized and demagnetized. The floating, falling carcasses exuded St. Elmo's fire as if releasing the vestiges of spirits they once had. Dropping and slowing to a virtual crawl through the dusty air, the vessel headed for the North Arch, one of the four enormous arcs of steel which produced the wave nets forming the enervated

shell of energy high above. The chosen location was furthest from the rising sun, although the brightness of morning would not be seen for many hours yet and then only as a mockery of the glory seen by others fortunate enough never to cross this border and partake of this test, this perverted honor.

Extending legs to the surface, the beetle-ship found the clearest space and landed, the feet yielding to harder metals fused over time, embedded in the stony ground. Apparently, the craft died and lay still for some time, preparing to release its passenger-pilot. Climbing the root systems of this leviathan sepulchre, static discharges cracked and echoed, their voices being louder even than the whispered implosion of atmosphere as the vessel split open, its lone occupant assured of his immediate safety— radius .5 km in every direction— no threats— all clear. The seals broke and the virgin hunter was set loose, borne aloft and steady over the landscape, flying low and just clearing the multitude of broken wings and spindly antennae all reaching upward as if begging the heavens to pluck them out of hell.

Elevation-6 meters; speed-12 kph; heading-86 degrees Southwest. The hunter fixed on a point of infiltration knowing that his quarry would be within the most easily defended environment—the refinery core's endo-cell. There was a 91 percent chance of finding her there during the eighth hour, the present time plus three minutes. A noticeable condensation



formed on the hunter's armored exterior. To an imaginative observer, it might be assumed that he was sweating at the prospects of entering the dome which steadily consumed more and more of his field of vision. Such a theory was doubtful because at this stage of development the unit was not capable of nervous tension. He had been equipped with much; in fact, all that was necessary for survival had been given to him—in small amounts to test his efficiency, but with built-in potentials and back-ups which more than sufficed. After all, he was a great investment and the first to make this journey in the past five decades; however, all capabilities and apparent honors were small consolation when one is faced with the knowledge of going inside that refinery. Perseus was not happy.

The quarry flew across open skies through the fragrant vapors and cool, misty clouds; she dived and let the currents carry her upward again in a rush of exhilaration. The cerulean seas spread below her had a gentle demeanor as evidenced by the stillness, the unturbulence of its waves. Gliding lethargically, yet gracefully, she engaged in a long, slow fall, twisting her descent into a wide, airy helix.

The seas rose below her in the strangest, friendliest way... like a little girl reaching toward a kitten caught in the branches of a tree. She closed her eyes and with delicious sensitivities, savored the splash and the envelopment of the warm waters around her. As she sank into colder depths, she felt the tug and beckon of her true surroundings. Medusa rose from the tank and was greeted by the amber light filtered overhead.

She inhaled, even though she had no real need to do so, held it 30...40...50...60 seconds, released it through the spiracles alongside her legs and abdomen which were still immersed; the spiracle openings bubbled in a gleeful manner as the air

escaped. She did it again (as it amused her so) then stepped out of the cooling bath tank. Her ophidian cables hissed sharply as she pulled them out of the power-cell outlets then let them writhe and squirm about her shoulders and back. Sometimes they weighed heavily from her scalp, being firmly rooted as they were in her cranium and dorsal spine filaments, but the benefit of having them placed on her head was the dreams caused as a side-effect by the influx of energy.

She often dreamed naturally without the aid of this curious by-product of power consumption, but those experiences didn't have the feel or verisimilitude of the electrically induced dreams like the one she had just now. She mused on this point as she walked out of the slick humid chamber into her garden which was lush and luxuriously tropical in nature. She inhaled again but didn't hold it this time; the air was processed, filtered, then escaped through her spiracles releasing a cool, misty condensation of vapors alongside her slender form. She opened her wing structures and let the mist dance along their colorful folds and ribs. She sauntered to the sheer ceramic edge of a deep, clear pond and looked down into it. Her reflection bedazzled even her sometimes—her eyes exuding a barrage of color spanning the spectrum and flashing like a swarm of wasps rushing to attack. Recoiling, she closed her eyes... filtering it... perceiving it... adjusting. When she looked again, she saw the colors fade, resolve into her face. Like any woman, she wished she had the ability to change the little things about her which annoyed her the most; bits here and there could be shrunken or enlarged; her countenance and expressions could be less exaggerated. She made faces at the visage glaring obstinately back at her, imitating her. One comfort, which reared its head as curse at times, was the fact she had a fully integrated unit-mass—she had as many organic elements as non-organic;



she held a certain pride in her cellular-cybernetic assemblage of a body so many others, including her creators, considered an abomination. To her it was gloriously unique. She stood and modeled for herself, striking a pose of sheer vanity with her wings stretched out triumphantly behind her. After a few more poses showing off the rippling muscles and steely cables so perfectly integrated as to be nearly indistinguishable, she laid herself down, folding her wings and retracting her talons. Maybe she was satisfied with herself because she had no choice ; maybe her vanity was just a concession to avoid depression and fight the loneliness. The white sand beneath her was as soft and warm as a thick fur coat. She stared upward at the concentric rings of the windows above her; the ruby light being partially obscured by a few daring strands of a flowery, curlicue vine. She became lost in the serpentine twists and turns; her eyelids crept slowly across the glassy surface of her dark, sparkling orbs...she slept.

Entering the metallic mound of the refinery was rather simple; a comparatively small vent served well to this purpose. Negotiating the air-duct intake tubes was only slightly more complex than discerning the most efficient method of compromising the dome-structure. Moving slowly with the current, Perseus made a well-controlled effort to avoid any buckler-snap traps in which pressure changes in crucial air-mass in a certain area would trigger an O-ring shaped device encircling the tunnel to release a powerful bolt of high-intensity electricity to strike down whatever happened to be within radius. The "i" element, Perseus' imaginative capabilities, started heating up. A simple ball-bearing would do nicely. Popping the steely sphere from a shoulder disk-socket in his armor, Perseus balanced the orb on an upraised finger; retaining control over its magnetic field as well as his own, Perseus led the sphere ahead of him by a distance of 3

meters after calculating the approximate shocking zone of a buckler-snap. He wished he had a simple frequency detector like the one back in the vessel waiting for him several kilometers away. No...cheating is absolutely imperishable! He knew this had to be a true test of his abilities. He advanced, limbs retracted and his entire form resembling the little ball which proceeded him. It was now, during this forced-patience journey, that Perseus began to exercise more of his self-awareness, more of his imaginative capabilities. What does she look like?", appeared as a speculative question in his mind followed by some absurd, and then by some not-so-absurd, notions of his mission objective—the mutant Medusa. A cobalt flash and a sledgehammer burst of electricity sent Perseus reeling back— more powerful than he thought it would be! Regaining himself, he pressed through the ring (assured of its non-activity whilst it recharged), relocated his ball bearing, then proceeded. This time he let the orb drift 6 meters away from him; it was at the edge of his remote-levitation field, but it was a safer radius than the previous one. Perhaps it was inopportune, but the potential for nervous tension started to realize itself. Perseus was evolving.

Medusa dreamt of strange things curiously tickling and caressing her. At the moment, she was drifting on the borderline between reality and fantasy and experiencing an odd combination of disturbance and fascination. A student of dreaming and sensuality, Medusa was absorbing all the feelings and mystery when she detected something outside—ozone. She felt the electrified air so clearly. From where though? She arose to a state of alertness with eyes, nose, mouth, cables, wings all sampling, sensing, detecting her surrounding. Nothing too close; where could it have come from? She pondered only seconds—a buckler-snap! An intruder! It had been a long time ago, decades in fact, since

she had to outwit a challenger to save herself. Still sharp, her instincts told her what to do.

Persus continued his complex journey, choosing the vent-system openings with care and caution. After 4 more electrical burst, and no harm done, he gained a mite of confidence and quickened his pace knowing that he had chosen a safe distance from the traps; however, he was nearing something much more dangerous than any of the buckler-snaps— his objective. Soon he came to a long shaft leading straight down. A flicker of light welled up from its base and Perseus recognized this as the final stretch. The hazy flicker had been weakened by the many layers of fibrous filters resembling thick, translucent cobwebs. Perseus dropped down the shaft, tearing through the filters with a gentle ripping sound at each obstruction. At the bottom, there was a curve in the shaft leading to the now unobstructed light source. He prepared himself for the encounter.

Medusa lay still beside the pond, her back to the source of ozone she had detected. She feigned slumber, but was in fact aware of everything around her. She felt the presence slip closer meter by meter. Her ophidian cables tracked energy output instinctively and acted as eyes in the back of her head. The intruder paused... 1 meter away... completely silent. Medusa decided to strike first. Her snaky cables arranged themselves together in one direction as if trying to escape the head, but in truth they were clearing the way for her head to spin on its axis a full 180 degrees around to face the intruder. She unleashed her optic barrage on the unit and watched it fall to the ground with a soft thud. It was made completely inactive in microseconds, but Medusa attacked so quickly that she had little time to realize it was only a miniature scouting probe—a remote-controlled eye—she had deactivated. As the spying eye sat there in the sand,

she became aware of the real assailant must be within 6 meters to have levitated the probe. She was still in danger; there was a close threat hiding somewhere in the tangle of plant life surrounding her. This hunter was clever. Medusa quickly realigned her head and dove into the pond and swam to its furthest depths. At the bottom, she turned and looked up; the hunter was looming directly over the place she dove in. His image was distorted and shimmered fitfully with the ripples in the water, but she could see him well enough; he looked like a rough-hewn ball with many joints and segments, but as she studied him he changed. Like an armadillo uncurling itself once a threat had passed, the intruder opened and straightened itself out. She watched in amazement as he transformed into a structure very similar to her own; he was humanoid. His coloration was even similar to hers—grayish white with highlights of deep crimson.

After transforming, Perseus released his levitation then sharply descended feet-first in to the water with a tremendous splash. Soon his mission would be over; this is what he was made for. Nervous tension became initiative and constitution which drove him to attack. She was in sight. Medusa counter-attacked; she saw the proverbial whites-of-his-eyes and opened her gaze to its maximum, sending a shockwave of energy through the water. Perseus recoiled, stunned, but unharmed—not deactivated! Her gaze did not penetrate his central processing unit; the optical filters his creators engineered were successful. He gained more confidence; it was his turn now, and he had looked the Gorgon in the eye and survived. If that was her best defense, she was doomed. Medusa, now panic-stricken, flew up and out of the pond; Perseus followed firing bursts of highly-concentrated liquid nitrogen pulses toward the fleeing target. The freezing liquid took a wing-tip off and grazed her legs



with a burning sensation. Medusa knew that her next plan of action would require some extraordinary aerial acrobatics. Perseus fired again— too quickly and cocky though. She dodged the blasts, and then arching her body into a tight, streamlined form with her limbs held close, she flew towards him and sailed beneath him, rising up again behind him. Perseus aligned his pulse weapons to deliver coup-de-grace, but before he could fire, Medusa's snaky cables found solid purchase in his spine. The serpentine cables locked on tight to Perseus' on line systems, not only absorbing power, but also accessing his central processors. Medusa instantly knew it all: his training, the mission objectives, the engineers design, the test, the creators' plans and programs. She recognized the creators as her own and realized that in a most perfidious act, they created Perseus to destroy their progeny! Peraseus' design was similar, almost identical in fact, to her own. They made him in the image of what they had unintentionally created and abandoned decades ago. Perseus was a fully integrated unit-mass. Medusa burrowed deeper into his mind, to the very core of his being. All the programs were laid before her: the organic cells, the artificial cell complete with nano-nucleic and laser programs, the biochemistry, the biomechanics, the anatomy, the integration, then at last the very keys that unlocked the whole mystery! She absorbed it all into herself and concentrated all of her mutant-energy to redirect the programs; she began to open locks set so long into her system as to be a subliminal trace... she remembered now!

They had been suspend midair for several minutes— paralyzed. Then they descended together and a grotesque metamorphosis took place. Writhing convulsions gripped them as they began to literally disintegrate. The organic and non-organic components separated, shedding each other like dead skin. At last it was complete. No more unit-mass. No

more cybernetic union.

Hours passed as they lay there; the shock was almost too great, but both Perseus and Medusa survived the transformation which had returned them to the base form they originally had before the creators and engineers remade them in blasphemous experiments. Medusa stretched and felt a long-forgotten sensation as her heart beat for the first time in decades; she inhaled deeply and exhaled. Over and over, she inhaled and exhaled, marveling at the wonder of breathing. Perseus was doing the same as he lay there looking at the brightly lit ceiling; he looked at the dawn as it filtered down into the garden where he lay, and he looked at it with real eyes. The artificial shells which had shared their bodies were cast off beside them, lifeless. Lifeless also were the programs which had been part of their minds. Perseus looked into the eyes of Medusa. She was no longer a mutant, no longer the hunter's quarry. The sparkling orbs still had some power though, but it wasn't the barrage of destructive energy. Her eyes were warmer than before, and were also pleasant to look into.

In some very significant ways, the mission was completely successful. The mutant Medusa was no more and Persus survived the test. It was not what the engineers had planed or expected, but the outcome was satisfying to the recipients who now dreamed together and lived again... the way the ultimate creator had originally intended for them.



Lillian by Anais Grey

The room is veiled in half shadows, as the fading light does little more than kiss the windows now. I sit on the bed, shrouded in darkness, patiently waiting as she rests against the mirror, painting her eyes black. She appears to be putting on a show as she paints her face, for me or herself or some imaginary audience. It does not matter.

She will spend hours on this ritual. She is like a whore who will rouge her lips to advertise her trade, but before each act will dutifully wipe them clean so as to not soil her client.

She is leaning against the vanity, gazing at herself. She is wearing her pink satin slip, and with the dripping candles positioned in front of her I can see the outline of her body through the thin fabric. The curve of her thigh, the swell of her breast, her smooth back; the images seem to dance, disappearing only to surface in the light to taunt me again and again.

Her hair is pulled back and away from her face. It looks like fine black silk. I can almost smell her perfume from where I sit, but it is more the memory of her scent which touches me.

She emerges from the closet in her low cut scarlet dress, her body the communion of light and shadow. The fabric seems to caress her breast, and in the back it hangs in folds from her shoulders, exposing naked flesh to her waist. As I help her to fasten her necklace, I feel the desire to reach to her and stroke her exposed skin. It should make her look vulnerable, I think, but the exposed flesh only makes her appear stronger.

She lulls me with her presence in the cab. We are sitting too close, swaying with the motion of the vehicle. It is as though we are trying to seduce each other by touch. Her perfume hangs heavy in the air, surrounding us the way our

laughter does. As she leans forward to adjust her stocking, her hand resting on my thigh, I see the cabby looking in the rear view mirror at her breasts threatening to fall free from the confinement of her dress. He smiles and I feel her hand twitch. She wants him to watch her. I laugh at this debauchery she plays. I kiss her, letting my hand stray across her body as he watches us, and know that I have joined in her game.

At the restaurant, we are again sitting too close, talking too loud. Eyes turn to us briefly, then turn away, still burning with unasked questions. She is not looking at any of them now. She is only looking at me, but it is to them that she has directed her laughter, her poise, her radiance.

I stare at her, this foreign beauty. I despise her for her pretense. I want to tear her costume from her, free her hair from its restraints, and kiss away the traces of lipstick and grease that shadow her face, obscuring her magnificence.

She opens her mouth to laugh, fingers half splayed on her wine glass stained red. It is a harsh sound, echoing from the rotting pit of her smooth white belly. Her arrogant cupid's lips stretch, becoming a figure disformed and grotesque, her limbs spreading before me and her abdomen swelling.

Her laughter saturates the air around me, a visible sound. I want to clasp my hands to my ears to shut out the clamor, but instead I clutch at her. I pull her closer to me than we have ever dared before tonight. Her lips part to meet mine, hot and salty with sweet wine and cigarette smoke. Her tongue resting between my teeth for a moment, then parting them, searching as her hands searched my body. White skeletal fingers fumbling with buttons and ties.

Her eyes are flaming pits, ember glowing hotly in her cadaverous radiance. Like pools of ink they shifted, dark



velvet lids descending like curtains on empty stages again and again.

Debussy is playing on the phonograph, the black circle spinning endlessly with the music. This faint echo swells with our voices, coaxing us to follow, then rushes to catch up with us.

The bottle of wine, almost empty now, crashed to the floor as we slammed against the vanity on which it was resting. It spilled its blood red seeping through the carpet, pooling on the floor boards, staining our memory.

She lay above me, the bird caught in the lover's grasp, her back arching to the ceiling and then falling towards me to kiss me, her hair falling around me like the branches of the willow tree. I slid my fingers down the expanse of her back, and gripped her waist in my hands, cupping her full buttocks. I kissed the small aureole of pink as I scraped my teeth against her nipples. I counted her ribs, each with the names of a thousand lovers inscribed upon the bone.

As our bodies convulsed against each other, I silently composed her epitaph. Did I love her or hate her? It did not matter. It only mattered that we were.

I whispered all of this to her when I woke. She lay half hidden in the refuge of the morning shadows and did not stir.

I told her that she had destroyed my innocence.



"Reclining Nude Before an Open Window"
Etching w/Aquatint by John Bocchino

Dragons Have No Eyelashes

by Lisa Dyche

Watch carefully when he smiles
you can see her reflection in her eyes.

The dragon is seven times her size.
His eyes are yellow and green,
and seem larger in the darkness.
His hot breath looks purple in her dreams,
and he feeds her cookies from his mouth.
Though his fire no longer hurts her,
it has burned all the hair on her body,
even her eyebrows.
Yes, she's a bald expectant mistress
and sleeps wrapped in his claws
close against his belly, with his tail wrapped
safely around the bedpost. Once they
were arguing and she threatened to cut the tail off.
Angry, using one of his talons,
he made a small hole in her left nostril,
it never closed, so now she wears a nose ring
and can't figure out why he likes it so much.

His scales stopped pricking her long ago.

Sometimes when he snores and his mouth falls
open a bit, she peeks inside to see if he
ate anything that day. Once she saw a small
piece of skull lying next to his forked tongue,
and another time, a long dark strand of hair
caught between his teeth.

He promised he stopped eating people,
but she doesn't believe him.

His teeth used to make nervous but they
don't anymore. They make good can openers.
One day he picked up her hand to
kiss it and accidentally sliced open her pinky—
he apologized profusely while bled and she
ended up having to get stitches at the hospital.
The doctor had smiled and told her
to stop playing with razor blades.
Of course, there was no more
hand kissing after.





Protocol

Porcupine feelings
must be stroked in right way
to avoid pricks.

- Carlotta A. Rody

Breezes

Tropical tradewinds
puff my imagined sails
to pirate beaches.

- Carlotta A. Rody

Seafarers Haiku

Thick fog blankets sea
Dark moonless night screens the view
Lighthouse brings solace

- James Riggs

Jealousy

Eyes colder than stone
push through the walls that bind you
Afraid of feelings

- Tracy L'automne

Curtain Call

Leaders like children
The genie released flies forth
Lifeless green desert

- Mark Jette'

Bright dots of purple
heads hanging in sultry morn.
Iris awakens.

- Jeanne Cavan

Puffs of yellow fluff.
Wide V's open to the sky.
Food is on the wing.

-Jeanne Cavan





"Untitled" Monoprint by Nancy Hanks

A Soldier's Eyes

In anger,
I look at those we defend.
In resentment,
I envy those who have not seen
The possibility of war
From a soilder's point of view.

In fear,
I watch the future
Expecting the call,
That may someday come.
Pulling me from protected circles
Of white washed walls,
Close friends and crowded malls,
And a family I may never see again.

In prayer,
I cry to my God,
For strength against my fears,
And the courage to strengthen my comrades.

In my dreams,
I see possibilities
Of coming home to my loved ones happily.
Or sadly lost,
On some foreign shore.
With none to morn
My faded carcass,
Or to cover the shame
Of my dead exposed body.

In reality,
I make my peace
With my God and fellow man.
That come what may
My heart, soul, and mind will be free,
And at peace.

- Bentley N. Williams Jr.

Who Is He

The thoughts began as they often do.
with dreams of others in place of you.
As the cobwebs part and the past becomes clear
he could lose it all with just one more beer.
Questions went unanswered, Bad feelings unwept
Until he unlocked the door where memories were kept.
With the help of the Big Guy and people who care
illumination and reason made everything clear.
He's not as bad as I thought, He's not as good as I dreamed
this man I call self It's strange but it's me.

- William A. Fey

Cards

The smoke fills the room like a deep fog.

Long faces sit at the table.

Faces filled with hope, and faith in their gods; the
jacks, aces, queens and jokers.

The sound of chips, like that of rattlesnakes is the
only sound heard

Owners of the long faces look through fixed eyes; the
only part of their bodies that move, are their shaky hands
as they monotonously extinguish and ignite cigarettes.

The addicts stay like statues as I leave the table.

The veil of smoke closes around them, leaving them in
their world.

- Reynaldo Ramirez





"Untitled" Brush&Ink Wash by John Travisano

Recipe For A Perfect Poem

by Brian Beaudet

The poet is the greatest chef of them all.
He gathers words and sounds no matter how small
And prepares them in his own particular way.

The cook's intuition is his own good sense,
Along with his opinions mixed with experience,
Which guides him through the kitchen of thought each
day.

Each dinner is different in taste, touch, and smell
Like a steak of rare words cooked medium well
With all the adjectives trimmed off to make it less fat.

Each pinch of preposition and dash of device
Makes each meal of words taste just right
So that the customer he pleases keeps coming back.

His spice rack of words reads like a book
Written on the walls of his kitchen,
Come take a look:

Chili pepper,
Black pepper,
Marjoram,
Cumin
Celery salt,
And Parsley,

Garlic,
Leaves of Basil,
Jamaican Hellfire sauce,
Cloves,
Cajun spice,
And rosemary.

The poet is indeed the chef of the mind
Mixing up words and thoughts of every kind
And sorting them out in the most edible way.

Few cooks, though, know how to please everyone
With epic recipes that can never be overdone
So, to them I salute my spatula and say:

Keep cooking, keep cooking
Until it's done right,
So that the world may eat
Your odes each night.



TOMORROW IS THURSDAY OR THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOR

by
JAMES RIGGS

(Two Eastern Native American Indian housewives sitting in a teepee weaving a blanket)

1st Indian housewife: So you going tomorrow?

2nd Indian housewife: I don't know.

1st Indian housewife: Why not?

2nd Indian housewife: They're so strange.

1st Indian housewife: So you've seen them. Did you see what they look like

2nd Indian housewife: Hard to say, all you can see is their hands and feet.

1st Indian housewife: Yes, I heard from Poca that their wardrobe was strange, a bit old fashioned.

2nd Indian housewife: Oh my dear, you should see what they wear. Maxies that went out in the early seventies, high neck collars, long sleeves, and worse—no color. They dress in black only.

1st Indian housewife: Even in the summer?

2nd Indian housewife: Yes, all year long.

1st Indian housewife: You're kidding?

2nd Indian housewife: No their skin is so pale.

1st Indian housewife: Oh, so that's why everyone calls them pale-faces. I thought it was due to illness or something.

2nd Indian housewife: And did you see the size of their

boat?

1st Indian housewife: Boy, did I ever!

2nd Indian housewife: Makes the size of my brave's boat look like a canoe.

1st Indian housewife: It is a canoe.

2nd Indian house wife: Oh, yeah.

1st Indian housewife : So you don't like how they dress; that's no reason for not going tomorrow.

2nd Indian housewife: It's not that.

1st Indian housewife: Well, what then?

2nd Indian housewife: I just don't trust them. The neighborhood's not the same since they moved in.

1st Indian housewife: How's that?

2nd Indian housewife: They're so wasteful. Tearing down a whole forest to build one teepee. Then burning what they don't use or throwing their waste in the rivers and oceans.

1st Indian housewife: You're kidding? You've been in their home?

2nd Indian housewife: Yeah, tree after tree stacked on top of each other until they form a huge square. You could fit five teepee inside one of theirs. The floors are made out of hard wood. One wonders how they could stand on their feet all day, let



alone sleep.

1st Indian housewife: Maybe they're used to the floors because of the hard moccasins they wear.

2nd Indian housewife: No, that's not it. They complain how sore their feet are from wearing those hard, tight moccasins all day.

1st Indian housewife: Well, why do they wear them if it hurts so bad?

2nd Indian housewife: Masochists, I guess.

1st Indian housewife: Must be.

2nd Indian Housewife: They'd be better off just going barefoot.

1st Indian housewife: But still you haven't given me a good reason for not going to tomorrow's dinner party.

2nd Indian housewife: I tell you, I just don't trust them. You remember my cousins, Maya, Aztec, and Inca who retired down south?

1st Indian housewife: Yes, I remember them. They retired in that wealthy resort area in the sub tropics.

2nd Indian housewife: Uh huh.

1st Indian housewife: They wore a lot of gold jewelry, didn't they?

2nd Indian housewife: Yeah.

1st Indian housewife: Weren't they architects and engineers? How are they?

2nd Indian housewife: Not good.

1st Indian Housewife: I'm sorry.

2nd Indian housewife: They were at first until the foreigners moved in.

1st Indian housewife: You mean the same ones that moved into our neighborhood.

2nd Indian housewife: No. Not exactly. These people are called Conquistadors.

1st Indian housewife: Where did they come from?

2nd Indian housewife: The same neighborhood as the Puritans came from?

1st Indian housewife: So what happened?

2nd Indian housewife: I'll tell you what happened. The crime rate went up. Armed robbery, that's what happened. The Conquistadors started stealing all their gold.

1st Indian housewife: Why?

2nd Indian housewife: Probably to support their drug habit.

1st Indian housewife: But drugs are free. They grow wild in the forest.

2nd Indian housewife: Not their drugs. They weren't satisfied to just chew on a plant. They have to use an expensive process to turn the plant into powder. And that costs lots of womp-pum.

1st Indian housewife: So what do they do with this powder?

2nd Indian housewife: Shoot it in their veins with a needle. Or smoke it. Mostly they shove it up their nose and snort.

1st Indian housewife: Sounds insane to me.

2nd Indian housewife: And their religion is insane too.

1st Indian housewife: What's wrong with their religion, so long as they don't force it on me?

2nd Indian housewife: That's just it. They do force it upon you.

1st Indian housewife: So what's this religion about?

2nd Indian housewife: Not sure. Except I do know that, according to their religion, they allow couples to have sex in only one position. Facing each other.

1st Indian housewife: You're kidding. No wonder they need to get so high on drugs. I would, too, if I had to look at my husband while we did it. What's the name of their god they worship?

2nd Indian housewife: Aaaaah—I think they called him misery or missionary, something like that. I'm not too sure.

1st Indian housewife: I think you got it right. Those Conquistadors are definitely on a mission of misery. But I don't think that'd be a problem with the Puritans. They don't approve of sex.

2nd Indian housewife: That's just my point. One of these days they're going to go insane from lack of sex.

1st Indian housewife: Well, why don't your cousins just move back?

2nd Indian housewife: They can't because they're too poor now. The conquistadors turned their neighborhood into a third world country and immigration won't let them back in.

1st Indian housewife: Maybe my cousin Poca can help them. She married one of them foreigners.

2nd Indian housewife: Pocahontas!

1st Indian housewife: Yes.

2nd Indian housewife: A mixed marriage! How could her father allow something like that to happen?

1st Indian housewife: I don't know. He was pretty upset. He was ready to go to war while they were dating.

2nd Indian housewife: I should say so. There goes the neighborhood for sure..

1st Indian housewife: Yeah, she was in love with two of the foreigners.

2nd Indian housewife: Two!

1st Indian housewife: Both of them named John.

2nd Indian housewife: She was known to have a lot of Johns on the side.

1st Indian housewife: Yeah, well, one was so madly in love with Poca, he nearly lost his head over her.

2nd Indian housewife: I bet she got pregnant and had to get married.

1st Indian housewife: Well as a matter of fact.

2nd Indian housewife: This is too much!

1st Indian housewife: She is going to have a little brave . They're naming him Wayne Newton.

2nd Indian housewife: So tell me, how can she help my cousins?



1st Indian housewife: Poca and her new husbands are moving back to England. Perhaps they could pick up your cousins along the way and take them back. I hear the Mayflower will be making a second voyage back to their new neighborhood.

2nd Indian housewife: Sounds good.

1st Indian housewife: So, will you go to the feast.

2nd Indian housewife: I don't know. I still don't trust them.

1st Indian housewife: Tell me, Mrs. Manhattan, where do you get all that lovely jewelry you're wearing?

2nd India housewife: You know, my husband sold that useless land surrounded by the sea to the new Pilgrims for some jewelry.

1st Indian housewife: Thirty dollars worth, I heard.

2nd Indian housewife: I suppose we did take advantage of them.

1st Indian housewife: Right, and look at this new beaver-pelt carpet.

2nd Indian housewife: Nice.

1st Indian housewife: We got it for selling them some ocean front property on the cape.

2nd Indian housewife: So what's your point?

1st Indian housewife: They're morons. All they want is to live near useless, oceanfront property and they're willing to pay for it.

2nd Indian housewife: I guess we have been taking advantage of them.

1st Indian housewife: So you should go.

2nd Indian housewife: What is the occasion for?

1st Indian housewife: To celebrate their first harvest here in the new neighborhood and to give thanks.

2nd Indian housewife: Thanks for what? That we took advantage of them.

1st Indian housewife: Yes, exactly. The entire occasion is in honor of us and our generosity. That's why we were all invited.

2nd Indian housewife: Alright, maybe I'll go. But what are they serving for dinner?

1st Indian housewife: Turkey

2nd Indian housewife: Turkey! Now I understand where the colonist got all their brain food from. Those dumb birds. I can't eat turkey. I'm a vegetarian. All I eat are nuts, berries, fruits, and vegetables. Are they serving any vegetables?

1st Indian housewife: Potatoes.

2nd Indian housewife: What's a potato?

1st Indian housewife: Some sort of root.

2nd Indian housewife: God, must be like eating dirt.

1st Indian housewife: Don't worry. Everyone's bringing a covered fish.

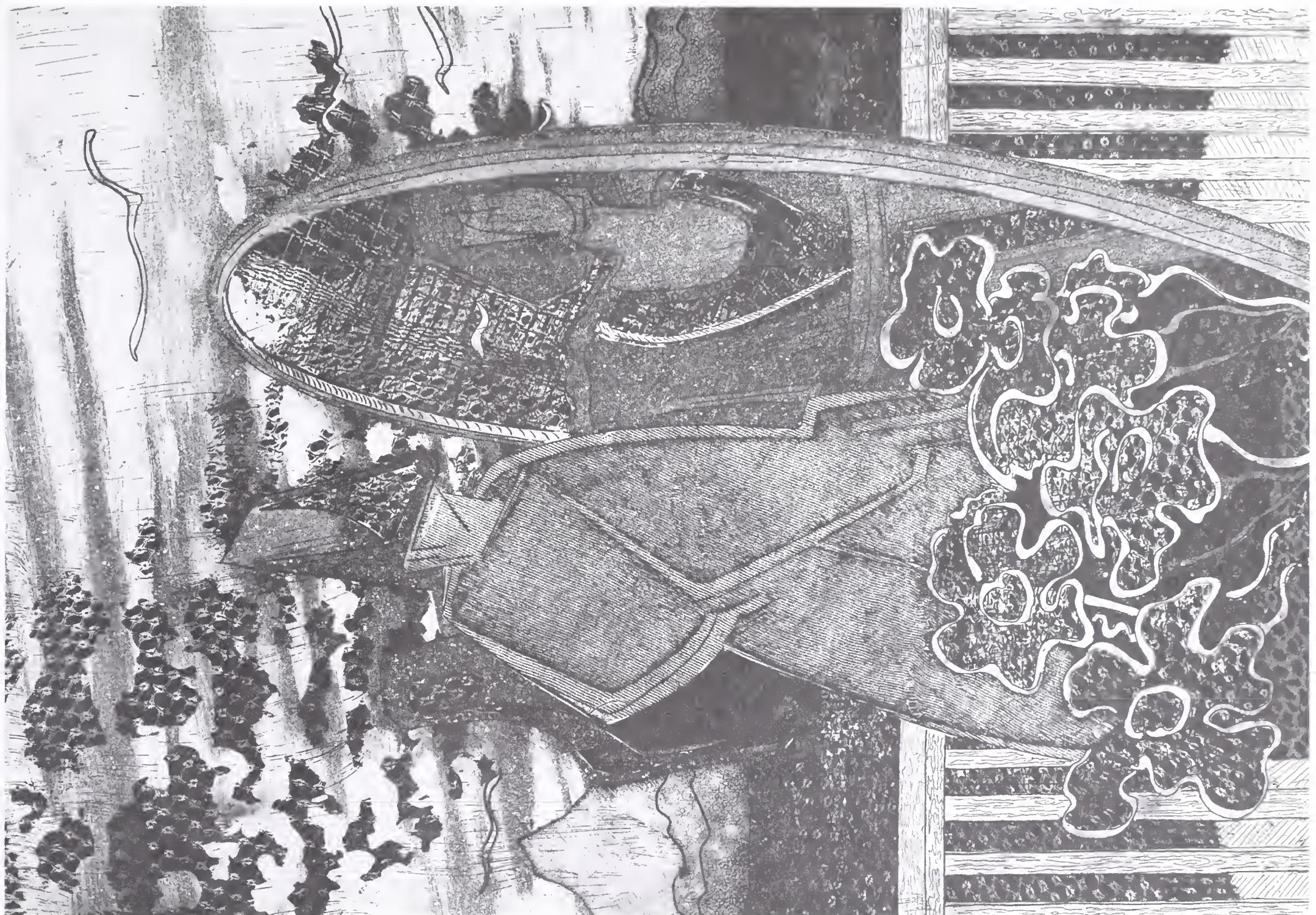
2nd Indian housewife: What are you bringing?

1st Indian housewife: Corn.

2nd Indian housewife: Corn... hummm...perhaps... maybe, I just might go.



"Untitled" B&W Photograph by Susan Gunter



"The Tholian Triangle" Etching by John Bocchino

The Price of a Chop

by Joy Duffy

"I'll take a pork chop, sir."

The butcher looked around the shop. He came around the counter to where she stood. "How many times do I have to tell you not to come in here?"

"But I was feeling hungry for a chop. Ain't had one now for neight on two months."

"I don't care. Get out of here."

She tilted her gray head upward and looked him in the eye. "Yes sir, I got me a hankering for a pork chop."

The butcher walked over to the window, pulled the shade down and walked back to her. "If any of my customers see you in here they'll stop coming."

"Why's that?"

"Because you stink. I don't want people to think..."

"What do you care what people think. Ain't my fault there ain't no modern conveniences under that bridge. How am I going to take a bath and smell pretty like those fancy ladies that come in here? Can I get that pork chop now?"

"Absolutely not. Now get."

"No can do, I'm hungry for a chop. Just one chop would be plenty for a little woman such as myself."

"I don't suppose you have money to pay for this chop."

"Wrong, sonny. I got money." She reached into the shopping bag and rummaged around in the bottom, displacing scraps of paper which tumbled to the floor.

"Pick that trash up right now."

"Yes sir, I am sorry." She bent at the waist and everything spilled from her pockets. A broken marble rolled haphazardly across the floor as she was trying to reach a domino and a scrabble tile that had fallen.

"What in the hell is all this junk?"

She struck her best dignified pose and said, "Surely you don't begrudge me my belongings."

"Get your belongings and get the hell out of here."

She looked at his red face. "I came here to get a pork chop. If in you'll stop distracting me, I'll get my money and be on my way."

"Okay, get your money."

"Thank you." She turned the shopping bag upside down on the floor.

The butcher gasped. "You can't do that." He looked around exasperated. "Look, you've got to clean this up. My ladies will be coming soon to fetch meats for supper. You cannot be here."

"Why?"

"Look, I'm only going to explain this one time. Country Estates is a wealthy neighborhood. That means rich people live here."

"I'm not stupid. I know what wealthy means."

"My point is the only bad thing about this whole neighborhood is you bums under the bridge."

"Well, I never..."

"Look at yourself. Your hair is matted, your dress is filthy and your hands are grimy."

"Not everyone can be rich."

"I know, but you could at least be clean and neat."

"I hate to be the one to enlighten you, sonny, but there ain't no showers under that bridge. How you be expecting me to wash and do my hair? Maybe you want me to come to your house."

He stepped back. "Heaven forbid."

The butcher kicked her stuff together with his foot. Several coins skittered across the floor. A penny rolled under the counter. "Damn," she said, "That was part of my chop money." She picked the coins out of the rubble. "Thirty-nine, forty, forty-one. How much is a pork chop anyway?"

"Believe me, you don't have enough."

"Why do you insist on berating me?"

"Because you're trash. Your kind of people don't want to work. Then you come to a nice business like this and beg. It's deplorable."

"I'm not begging. How much could a lousy pork chop cost anyway?"

"More than you have there."

"How much?"

"Somewhere around a dollar-twenty-five."

"What! That's outrageous. I'm only talking about one chop."

"See, I told you, you don't have enough."

She looked at the money she had gathered. "Sixty, sixty-one..."

"Cut it out. You're only trying to make me feel sorry for



you so I'll give you a pork chop. I know your kind."

"I certainly am not."

"I don't even know why I'm still talking to you. Get your junk and get out." He turned away.

She shoved things into her bag, being careful only about the notebook paper which she stacked neatly. She carefully and lovingly placed it in a plastic bag inside the shopping bag.

"There," she said.

"Good, now get out of here."

She reached for his hand. He recoiled with a look of horror.

"If you want me to leave, you better help me up cause I don't care if I stay here all night. Kind of damp under that bridge at night."

Hesitantly, he reached out his hand and pulled her up.

She smiled. "Thank you, young man. Now what about that pork chop..."

"Don't start that again."

"But I'm craving a chop for my dinner, sir. I can pay."

"Look, this is getting us nowhere. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you promise to stay away from my shop forever, I'll give you a nice, fat pork chop. How's that?"

"Why sonny, I'm mighty grateful to you for the gesture; however, I can't accept."

"Why not?"

"I won't be accepting no charity."

"Don't consider it charity. Consider it as payment for a job."

"A job?"

"Yeah. I'm paying you to stay from my shop."

She squinted her eyes and looked at the ceiling. "Why sonny, that's very kind of you to offer an old lady a job. I accept the position." She stood up straighter.

He went to the counter and selected a large pork chop, placed it on butcher paper and wrapped it. He put the chop into a bag and handed it to her.

"Thank you kindly, sir. It's been nice working for you."

She headed for the door then stopped abruptly and turned around

"What now?" he asked. "Why that strange look on your face?"

"I kind of got a hankering for a potato."

"Oh for Christ's sake, take the potato and get out of here."

"Yes sir." She scooped up a potato and scooted out the door.

When she arrived at her "home," she rummaged behind "her" bush and found "her" number ten coffee can and ice pick.

She scoured the ground for small sticks and stuffed them into the can. Then she dug around in her bag, found matches and started a fire. She threw the potato into the fire, speared the pork chop with the ice pick and carefully laid it over the fire.

She sat back against a cement post and got the notebook, paper and a pencil out of the shopping bag and began writing. She stopped occasionally to turn the chop.

She finished writing and looked up. The chop was just right. A little black on the outside, but that's okay. She slid the chop onto a newspaper and retrieved the potato from the fire.

While the food cooled, she organized the pages she'd written, folded them, and inserted them into the bag that had previously held the chop.

She ate more slowly and savored every bite. It wasn't often she enjoyed a meal more.

When finished, she stood, brushed off her hands, picked up her shopping bag, and started walking. "Got to hurry," she mumbled.

She entered the train depot and headed for the lockers along the far wall. She fumbled in her bag for a small key which she used to open the locker. She retrieved a worn, but clean dress, scuffed black shoes, and a black purse. She headed for the ladies' room.

Dirty hands became clean. Her face was scrubbed and makeup applied. The dirty dress exchanged for the clean one, and the mismatched shoes for the black pumps. Her grey matted hair combed and untangled. The dirty things were shoved into the shopping bag. She put the notebook paper in her purse, locked the shopping bag in the locker and left.

Ten minutes later she passed through the double doors of a high rise building and took the elevator to the third floor. She passed people sitting at typewriters, but didn't stop. Her slender hands pushed open the door that said "Editor." She threw the bag on the desk. She sighed and plopped into a chair.

Mr. Davenwood opened the bag and pulled out the notebook paper. "Dam it, Tracy, when are you going to learn how to type?" He started reading "The Price Of A Chop." "Tracy, this is great, as good or better than your first story. We'll publish this. You just may be working yourself into a steady job. But, I must ask, how on earth do you come up with such touching stories about the homeless. They all seem so real."

"You'd be surprised, Mr. Davenwood. You'd be surprised."

Except

He has nothing to fear
 Except for himself
 Looking through his x-ray mirror
 He peers deep inside his soul

Sees his fears hidden inside
 Searing anger building
 To explosive potential

Another person lives
 Inside his body
 He speaks to make him laugh
 He cries to make him sad
 The emotions he feels
 Are his alone

His thoughts should never be
 Heard by friends or lovers
 For the damage that occurs
 Can never be healed again

This person who lies within
 Is not at all like him
 Or at least like the one you see

He lashes out in anger
 Violent thought persist
 Hatred is unleashed
 Sorrow not concealed

He will stay hidden
 Never to emerge
 No one will ever know him
 Except for himself

The Children's Eyes

To see the world through a child's sight
 To see all things as new
 All would sparkle in still learning eyes
 The beauty of things never seen

No hatred would exist
 Nor prejudice of any kind
 For colors have no meaning
 Through the children's eyes

But as the years go on
 The sparkle begins to fade
 Curiosity dies
 The monotony of life

Same thing every day
 Repetition does us harm
 Never stop to see
 The splendor of our world

Vultures

Gear teeth grind to interlock
 Rubber screams on asphalt turf
 Metal crashes metal
 Add the chimes of breaking glass

Steering wheel meets chest
 Broken ribs, collapsing lungs
 Windshield meets with flesh
 Paint the dashboard red

Blood thirsty vultures
 Slow down their pace
 Crane their necks to sample
 Another taste of death.

The Grove by Thomas E. Smith

John loved trees. Matter of fact, he liked trees better than he liked most people. Sometimes he talked to them, as if they were sentient beings, and was outraged when anyone caused harm to his beloved forest. Today he was outraged.

John always visited the scene of the crime. It helped get his juices of outrage flowing, making him much more effective when confronting the perpetrators. As usual, he parked a few minutes away, savoring the walk through the still forest, the air heavy with the scent of pine resin and last year's leaves. He enjoyed it all the more because of the contrast this idyllic scent presented to the carnage he knew lay ahead.

In the high Cascade Range, morning came late on the dark side of the mountain, and the twisty road wound him around huge ancient trees with feet still shrouded in cool early-morning mists. John felt the rush of awe he always felt in the presence of these old-growth giants with their great arms spreading above him, fingers interlocked into an unbroken canopy.

Pausing in reverie, he had an image of large, gnarled sentry trees standing guard with their leafy umbrellas, blunting the power of sun, wind and rain before filtering them softly to the ground. They formed an unbroken line, except perhaps where an old soldier, grown weary of forever holding his shield aloft, finally submitted to the force of gravity. He would then come crashing to the ground, ending his life on the spot where long ago, he'd been born. But the trees would soon close ranks by spreading their seed on their fallen comrade who would nourish the new life as his body returned to the earth.

The trees even protected the land from the dangerous view of mankind since the nearest humans were flying miles above, crammed elbow to elbow in jets hurrying across the sky. And if they bothered to look down at all, the wrinkled mountains looked like nothing more than rows and rows of white-haired old men wearing soft, green shirts. The trees had always been able to protect their boundaries from just about everything.

Except the road. The killers came in on this damned road, John thought grimly. Resuming his journey, he rounded a final curve as a mountain jay scolded him accusingly, warning the forest of his approach. But even the noisy jay went silent as John stepped through the line of trees...into a scene of havoc.

His eyes were accustomed to the cool, dim forest, and he flinched involuntarily as the sudden glare of full sunlight revealed the awful devastation around him. No matter how many times he'd seen the aftermath of a timber clear-cutting operation, he was always stunned by the scale and totality of the destruction. He gazed through hot eyes at thousands of acres of ruined landscape, stretching for miles to a bare horizon, without a single tree to block the view.

"We've got to stop these bastards. This can't go on any longer," John fumed. With the anger came an adrenaline surge, speeding up his pulse and putting all his systems on a higher state of alert. He felt stronger, more alive, more confident. It was similar to the exhilaration he'd felt as a young man when, after a long winter, the fires of spring again flowed through his veins. He was starting to get pumped up now, ready to channel his anger into action.



But, after all, this was why he had come here: To get ready for the confrontation this afternoon.

He'd joined the environmental group shortly after seeing his first clear-cut. The group had grown more radical over time. In the beginning, they'd tried all the easy stuff, the committees, caucuses, meetings with bureaucrats and political jerks, and it hadn't worked. Blah, blah, blah, blah and no action. Meanwhile, ancient woodlands that couldn't re-grow in several lifetimes vanished.

"Well, we tried nice, and they didn't understand; maybe they'll understand some friggin' nasty!" thought John, really getting into it now. Today, his group had a media event planned. They would try to prevent the starting of a new clear-cut by tying themselves to the trees and maybe block the road for the haulers and 'dozers. Of course, they couldn't really save any trees; what they hoped to do was increase awareness and get publicity for the cause. And, with any luck, they could goad one of the stupid loggers or deputies into using undue force. Now that would get some press, hell, maybe even national news! Although the cops rarely fell for it. Sometimes one of the loggers would take a swing because they took it personal. The loggers called his group "tree huggers", accusing them of trying to take away their jobs, to stop logging altogether.

"That isn't the point at all," John muttered. "There're plenty of trees out there to cut. All we want 'em to do is stop clear-cutting. And in particular, stop clear-cutting these old-growth forests."

He stepped from the road into the wasteland. Even though it was not yet mid-morning, it was already uncomfortably hot. The damp earth, untouched by the sun for hundreds of years, now began to give up moisture, raising

the humidity to sauna-like levels. Stepping over debris, John caught the pungent scent of sawdust cut from still-living trees and imagined what it must have been like during the slaughter.

He could almost hear the chainsaws snarling as the lumberjacks teased the triggers to get the revs up: "buddnn...buddnnn...budnnnnn," then turning into a maniacal scream: **budnnNNNRRRRRRRRRRRR** as the whirling steel teeth chewed into a helpless victim, spitting pieces of wood and sawdust thirty feet away. The first two cuts took a large wedge-shape out of the front of the tree. It was the second cut, entering through the back, that did the dirty work, bringing the big tree down in short order. But, while it might've been quick, it wasn't painless.

The tree began to tilt before the blade had completely severed the trunk. Uncut wood started to splinter and split, tearing apart with loud cracking reports. As the lean increased, the dying tree pulled its branches from its neighbors' grasp, then plunged to earth, bouncing once, twice, and crushing its outstretched limbs as it settled to rest. The splintered stump, having no way of knowing that the wound was mortal, began to ooze its healing sap for a body no longer there. Now, the shrieking saw was announcing the impending death of the neighbor who'd stood beside his fallen companion for hundreds of years.

The lumbermen were very much like old-time whalers, taking only the most valuable parts of the beast, discarding the rest to rot. Trimmers descended on the fallen giants, their buzzing chainsaws dismembering the branches. Finally, the limbless carcasses would be winched to the road, destroying most of the remaining undergrowth in the process. And so, in a brief span of days, another primeval forest disappeared into the insatiable mills.



By now, the anger building inside John had turned to hate. He wasn't yet the kind of man who translates hate into violence. Instead, the hate would harden into a cold resolve, allowing him to use any method short of violence against his foes. And in the change from anger to hate, his adversaries became monsters with no redeeming virtues. It was much simpler that way; there was no need to look deeper into complex issues, no need to try to seek compromises. How can you compromise with the devil? These guys showed the forest no mercy; therefore, they deserved no mercy.

As he continued across the ravaged landscape, John felt like a burden had been lifted from him. No longer did he have to fret about the impact of his actions on the people or the economy of the region. Righteous hate has a way of deflecting all guilt to the other side, so any negative effects of the upcoming struggles rested solely on the shoulders of the lumbermen.

John had known the clear-cut would have this effect on him. It was a ritual he had gone through several times before. It was this renewal and justifying of his hate that was leading the group down the back side of the hill of "isms." With hate oiling the slope, they were progressing rapidly from the height of idealism through radicalism and extremism to eco-terrorism. They pounded spikes into the trees at random, to destroy the chainsaws, ignoring the fact that they might also injure the men operating them.

John realized that he'd been wandering for quite some time, and judging by his shadow, it was now late morning. He was deep into the clear-cut area and momentarily disoriented, so he turned full circle in order to get his bearing, and was stunned by the sight in front of him.

There, in the midst of the desolation, folded into a sharp crevice below the naked brow of two small hills...was

a tiny grove of trees. John marveled at why he hadn't seen it before, then realized that tucked down between the small hills as it was, the only way it could be seen was from the air.

As he walked down to get a better view, John was struck by how lovely the little grove was. No more than two hundred feet long by a hundred wide, it was bordered by several large, overhanging trees concealing the interior of a tiny valley. Underbrush near the center of the cleft framed a shaded opening that seemed to invite him in. Pushing aside the brush at the entrance, he stepped into the cool, sudden shade. Inside, John saw a trail of small mossy boulders zig-zagging up the sharply increasing grade, and dripping from the edges of the rocks were the unmistakable signs of a tiny spring-fed brook. It was almost dry now, but at other times of the year it must fill this enchanting little patch of woods with the music of its splashing.

Sitting on one of the small rocks by the brook, John drank in the tranquil beauty of the setting. But, he was dumbfounded that the grove existed at all. Why didn't they cut this down with everything else? Accessibility was certainly no problem. Company policy clearly mandated removing all trees in a clear-cut area and provided severe penalties for wasting marketable timber. There was no obvious reason to spare this little patch of woodland.

Still puzzled, John glanced down, and discovered the remains of a partially eaten apple. Fingering it, he mused, "Someone must've eaten lunch here." Then, understanding surged through him like a cold electric shock. Grasping what must have happened here but not wanting to believe it, John looked around frantically for some other explanation.

The woodcutters had paused here to eat, then let this little grove uncut for the same reason that he had entered it—because it was beautiful. There could be no other reason.





"Fatherhood" Charcoal Drawing by Khaled Ramadan

And it couldn't have been just one person's decision either! No, an entire six-man crew had eaten here discussed it, and then decided to save this tiny valley simply because it was too perfect to kill.

John staggered out of the trees back into the reassuring wasteland of the clear-cut. All the way back to the car, he felt his world turning upside down. Because, in one quick stroke, men three-days gone from this scene had sliced through his reservoir of hate and made themselves human again.

Later, John drove to the site of the confrontation he had previously arranged, and he felt drained from the catharsis in the grove. As he walked by the crowd of lumbermen, rangers, and deputies, he heard the reaction as his group realized he was here. Now the fun could begin. Their joy quickly turned to consternation as they saw his pale face.

"Jeeze, John, whatsa' matter with you?" said one.
"John, are you OK? You look awful!" said another.

"You guys are going to have to make it without me today. I feel like crap." As he walked away, John could see by the uncertain looks on their faces that there would be only token protest here today.

As he passed through the line of lumbermen, he glanced quickly at each face. He was searching for some visible flaw that would indicate this man was capable of the decency of saving the grove he'd seen today. "Ah, hell, it could've been any of 'em," he muttered.

Then, flinching at that thought, John walked away, wanting to hate them more than ever for making him hate them less.



"Muddy Waters 'Blues Legend'" Ink Drawing by Jennifer Lynn Jones



"The Black Hand Clamps" Oil Paint Stick by Ginevra

The Beauty Queen of Farno

by
Irving Pudalov

Our tour guide called it a "leisure day". With a scant two weeks in Italy it was scarcely a time to loll about a hotel. It was a dreary day, but we decided to rent a Fiat and wander the countryside. About thirty miles north, the car, erratic from the start, coughed, gasped and finally expired. Our efforts to contact the car rental agency were unavailing, but we did communicate with our tour guide. He promised to pick us up in the morning in a small nearby town called Farno where we were to spend the night.

At about 8:00 PM with the cold rain further dampening our spirits, a taxi deposited us at Farno's only hotel. It was a minimally lit, shadowy, ugly place with a crumbling facade. The lobby was disturbingly dark and the marble floor gritted under our shoes. Somehow I took for granted that there would be a vacancy in this Italian flop house, but not so. The room clerk explained that there was a "Festival of Beauty" in town and there were many visitors. Farno has a beauty festival every year, I learned. However, he assured us he would find something. Meanwhile, he advised us to have our dinner since the kitchen would close shortly.

We entered a deserted dining room where just enough light squeaked out of a few dirty bulbs to light our way. A large red ceiling to floor curtain spanned the room, obviously partitioning it. We seated ourselves in a corner table next to the red curtain.

I had been aware of it at first, but now it was overpowering—an acrid perfumed odor that almost made our eyes smart. While the odor was unpleasant, it was not entirely unfamiliar. Some yesteryear I had experienced this scent—perhaps the perfume confused my sense of smell. But how can you eat bridled with that awful odor? Suddenly a woman materialized, her features smudged by the dim light. She carried two large bowls of steaming pasta which she plopped in front of us, then shuffled away. The garlic and cheese emanating from the pasta cleared the air and we ate ravenously. Bowls now empty, we waited for the next course hoping it would be equally pungent. Thus we sat foolishly, sullenly, scarcely daring to breathe deeply. I feared for an exacerbation of my wife's sinusitis. Having been so upset by this experience she decided to leave for a

breath of fresh air. If she was up to it, she would come back for the rest of the meal.

While I sat at the table, I thought I heard some hushed sounds behind the curtain. Curiosity impelled me to grasp the curtain and pull it away from the wall. As my hand enfolded the curtain, another hand grasped mine. my instinctive jerk-back reaction brought no release.

"Come in, Signore. See the beauty queen of Farno."

The voice was both inviting and assuring and in a moment I was on the other side of the curtain. A small, squat woman whose black hair seemed plastered to her head held my hand firmly.

"Come. Come. Have no fear. Look at our beauty," she again invited.

Bewildered and a bit frightened, I looked about. In the center of the room was an open coffin resting its head and foot on chairs. Twolargecandelabras, each with six candles, gave a flickering illumination to the coffin. In the background, indistinct figures seemed to lurk as in some Greek tragedy.

"Come look, Signore," she entreated.

I began to experience some trepidation, but I approached the coffin. The odor was searing my mucous membranes. Why of course, it was embalming fluid excessively used. I was at the rim of the coffin, but found it difficult to look within.

"Look at her beauty, Signore."

Looking into the coffin was an experience I shall never forget. Shrouded in a shimmering diaphanous fabric lay a girl of such exquisite beauty that I gasped in astonishment. Perhaps it was the candle light, or perhaps the miasma of the embalming fluid. The effect was remarkable. There she reposed, open eyes glittering behind long lashes, lips parted, candlelight reflecting the luminescence of her skin, pomaded black hair coiled and subtly coiffured, hands clasped below her bosom, body slight awry giving her the position of a living person in recline. Was this lovely young girl truly a corpse? I was dismayed to experience a sensuous response. Perhaps this was a Madame Toussaud creation. I had to know. My hand hesitantly reached into the coffin. Suddenly my sleeve was firmly grasped.

"Not to touch, Signore. You like, no?"

"She is beautiful. Why is she here? How did she die?" I stammered.

"You will learn all soon. Your greatest desire will come true," she said enigmatically.

She let me look for a minute or two and then led me away.

"You like? She is yours, Signore. Now go finish your dinner. You woman grows impatient for your return."

Meanwhile, my wife had returned and I began to explain what had transpired behind the curtain. She looked at me incredulously.

"Here, come look for yourself."

I parted the curtain and to my amazement everything had disappeared—the coffin, the chairs, the candles, the woman. How could anyone believe the bizarre scene I not only witnessed but participated in?

We returned to the lobby expecting to be assigned a room. An elderly gentleman presented us with two keys. After much gesticulating and some TV Italian, we got the message—there were only single rooms available. My wife, after considerable persuasion agreed to spend the night in a small room on the fourth floor. I was given a more spacious room on the fifth floor. It had a larger bed and could have accommodated both of us. Knowing how exhausted she was, I figured she must be in bed—no sense disturbing her by moving her up to this room.

I noted that my bed was a four poster with an elegantly carved floral headboard. The room was exquisitely paneled with floral carvings in bas relief. A massive armoire, with cupids carved into its doors dominated the room. Buttons alongside the door and beside the bed controlled the lovely venetian glass chandelier, the only lighting in the room. This was no ordinary hotel room; this was a bridal chamber.

I locked the door and placed the clumsy lock in position. Still unsettled by me eerie experience, I slid into bed. That I could entertain sleeping under these circumstances surprised me. Fatigue and excitement had taken their toll and upon turning out the light, I was soon asleep.

How long I slept, I cannot say, but I was soon wide awake. No dream or nightmare or light of day had awakened me. The rain continued to pelt the window while my eyes searched the darkness. Something, someone had intruded into my senses. I thought my imagination had gone berserk. From the direction of the armoire I heard a creaking. someone was in the room. Terrified, I groped for the button that would light the room and perhaps give some reason to what was happening. I pressed, pounded, punched the button; but no light. And there it was again—that odor I smelled in the dining room. The scent was barely perceptible, but the entire scenario with that exquisite corpse and the funeral guardians was replaying in my mind. The odor had become more intense. I heard



the creaking again and I yelled "Who is there?" and fumbled unsuccessfully with the light switch.

"Who is in the room?" I yelled again.

A match scratched the darkness and a small candle was lit. "Have no fear Signore, I bring you only pleasure." I sat in bed frozen with fear.

"Ah, Signore," her voice almost crooning. "You had wished to touch her. You are sympatico. I bring her with me. Her name is Angelina and I give her to you for the night."

Two stooped figures emerged from the armoire, carrying something or someone. I heard the rapid breath of their exertion as they approached the bed. I felt the bed sag on one side.

My God, they are putting Angelina in the bed with me. I have to know even if it costs me my sanity or my life. I am bowstring taut as I turned my body toward the center of the bed. The woman was still there, her face flickering in the candlelight.

"Angelina is only for you. She is the queen of our beauty festival. You make her happy, yes? Bona Sera, Signore." The candle was placed on the headboard and now I can see the dead girl from the coffin. Her eyes are wide open and she is staring at me. There is a sultry seductive look on her face and I wonder how they managed to give a dead person this expression. Maybe she is not dead at all, but rather drugged or catatonic. My hand reached toward her. I felt her breast. It was soft and warm. My God, have they actually warmed her body for this occasion? My fingers crept toward her neck searching for a life sign or a pulse. Nothing—she was dead. The candle began to sputter and goes out. All was darkness.

I tried the light switch again, but it was as dead as the girl. I wanted no further encounter with whomever might be coming into this room. I stumbled towards the door, opened one of the locks, but the chain lock defied me. I heard more sounds behind me and the fear that I had contained exploded. I grasped the open door, jerked hard, and snapped the chain. In a state of utter panic, I rushed into the hall, banging on doors, shouting, but the occupants, if there were any, must have thought there was a madman loose in the hotel and refused to open their doors. Breathing heavily, my panic slowly began to subside. This had to be an hallucination. No one had hurt me in any way. Hesitantly, I returned to the room. The door was still ajar and I pushed it open with my toe. The room remained in total darkness. My hand crawled around the door jamb searching for the light switch. Happily, I found it and the chandelier now came to life. My eyes leaped to the bed, but it was

empty. The whole room was empty—the woman, the corpse, the candle were all gone. Gingerly, I opened the armoire and that was empty.

Confused and doubting my sanity, I collapsed into a chair. I sat in a stupor, mercifully dozing at times until the multicolored beams of light entered the room through the stained glass window. I rose from the chair stiffly and began to look about the room. There it was—a spot of candle wax on the floor. I placed my hand to my pounding head and in doing so, smelled the embalming odor of the dead girl. It had happened alright.

I descended to the lobby to find an elderly room clerk on duty. I recounted the night's events.

"Ah yes," he says, "You are in room 513. Maria brought you her daughter, Angelina, but you did not give her your love. Angelina drowned three days ago in our lake. Maria wanted her to know the joy of love just once before she was buried. You have added salt to her wound."

I listened incredulously to his explanation and went upstairs to find my wife. I told her what happened. She looked at me with and astonished expression.

"This hoax has gone far enough," she said angrily.

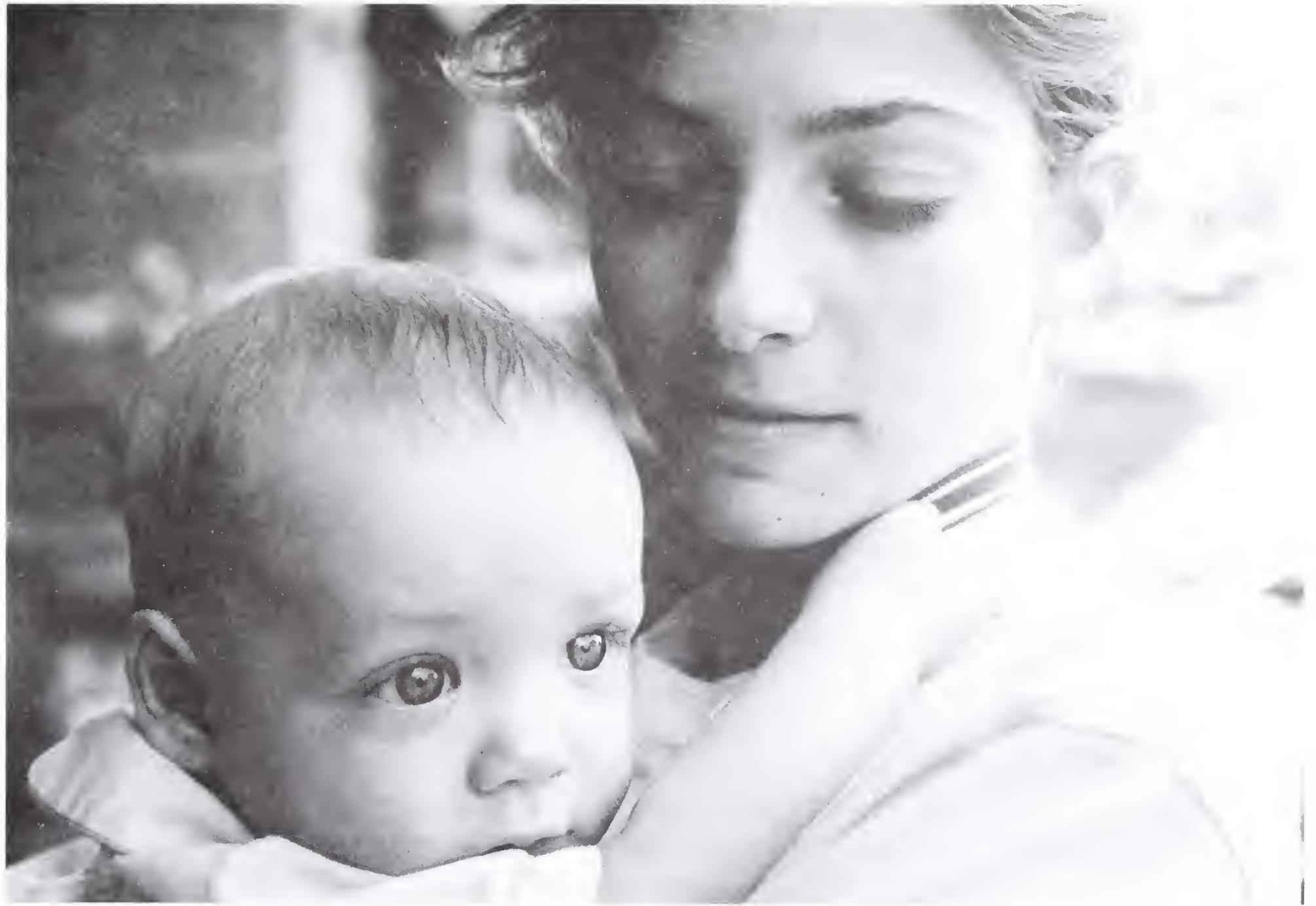
"Come down and speak to the room clerk yourself, and he will confirm what I've told you."

We packed her few things and made our way down the stairs. Gray morning light filtered through the dust filmed windows increasing the gloom of the lobby. I called for the room clerk, but there was no response. After making considerable clamor, a sleepy faced woman appeared.

"You want Alberto? He go home. What's you want with him?"

A horn bleated outside and I knew our tour guide had arrived to pick us up. As we left the hotel, my wife pressed a valium tablet into my sweated palm, and without a murmur of dissent I swallowed it dry.





"Untitled" B&W Photograph by Margarita Romagosa

Just Wait Until Next Season!

How often do you hear that after a team has finished a less-than-successful season? If you really think about it, though, that is a more fitting cry for the team that finished in first place: they can't wait to do it all again. This is also true with *P'an Ku*. After finishing another successful season, we are looking forward to next time. The only difference in our analogy is that we will be looking for new players to carry on the winning tradition. This is where you come in: we want you on the team!

Since *P'an Ku*'s season stretches through the entire school year, there is no real off season. In fact, recruiting for next season begins with this summer. If you've thought about getting involved or want to know what plans are in the works, the summer is the time to do it. It will be devoted to training for the coming season and will also produce a special project for the magazine staff. This is the time to join us--to get a start on next season.

All Positions Are Open

Editor

Assistant Editor

Art/Poetry/Fiction/Non-Fiction/Photography Editors

Layout/Design Staff

Publicity/Recruitment Staff

Proofreaders and Copy Editors

You don't need experience for most of these areas: you can acquire it this summer. Learn PageMaker and desktop publishing and design. All you really need is enthusiasm, a willingness to learn, and a desire to be part of a winning team. You provide a service to the college community and have fun as well. Give it a try. It doesn't matter what campus you are on; you can still be part of the team. There will be meetings on all campuses. There are also a limited number of scholarships available for those who really want to commit themselves to the team.

For further information, call Patrick Ellingham, faculty advisor, at 963-8858, South Campus, Bldg. 69/225.

If your leanings are more toward journalism, then *The Observer* is the place for you.

The winner of numerous awards, including best community college newspaper in the state of Florida and its 13th consecutive All-American rating from the Associated Collegiate Press, *The Observer* is the students' voice at Broward Community College.

The Observer is now recruiting staff for a special summer magazine and for next year. Though housed at North Campus, there are bureaus at both South and Central Campuses. It is open to all students, experienced or not.

For more information, call Jerry Elam, faculty adviser, at 973-2390, on North Campus.

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